

**ADOLESCENT GIRLS LIVING IN RUSTENBURG:
GENDER ROLES, GENDER RELATIONS AND
FUTURE EXPECTATIONS AS WOMEN**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

ABSTRACT

Arguing from a social constructionist perspective and using a qualitative methodology the aim of the present study was to explore different dimensions of gender amongst a group of adolescent girls between the ages of 14 and 18 years living in Rustenburg, South Africa. More specifically it explores and describes the following aspects of gender amongst these girls: (a) how young adolescent girls living in Rustenburg perceive gender roles in general and how they perceive their own roles in particular (b) their gender relations with other adolescents and (c) their views on and expectations of the future as women. The rationale for selecting Rustenburg as the geographical area of research is due to its semi-rural location. While rural communities are generally perceived to be more conservative than urban areas they do not escape modernizing influences such as the mass media. An underlying theme of the present study is thus to ascertain whether or not the girls in Rustenburg still have relatively conservative perceptions regarding gender.

The findings of the present study reveal that the participants have broken away from conforming to traditional roles assigned to women and would like to combine new modern roles with existing traditional roles. It is also clear that the mass media has a considerable influence in this regard. According to the respondents society values a woman that can succeed in being a good mother, wife and home-keeper as well as being a career woman. Most of the participants want to fulfil these multiple roles. The advantages of being career women, according to these participants, are that such women are independent and financially self-reliant.

Regarding gender relations, friendships with girls and boys are of equal importance to the respondents. On the one hand sufficient common ground exists to interact comfortably with boys, while on the other hand interacting with boys is seen as useful in obtaining insight into the life world of boys. However, a general opinion held by the girls is that they feel more comfortable to discuss more personal and intimate topics with their girl friends. Relationships with younger girls and factors influencing popularity among girls were also explored as themes.

Future expectations that are shared by participants are that they would like to complete their school education and attend a technikon or university to further their education. Their future

career expectations cover a wide range of occupational choices. Most of the participants want to get married in future – the ages varying between 25 and 30. They would also like to have children but only once they have established a good career. Their main concerns for the future are whether or not there will be job opportunities for them in the careers that they want to pursue.

OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie studie was om ondersoek in te stel na die volgende aspekte van 'n veelrassige groep adolessente meisies in Rustenburg se opvattinge m.b.t. gender: (a) hul opvattinge oor genderrolle in die algemeen en hul eie rolle in besonder; (b) hul genderverhoudings met ander adolessente; en (c) hul sienings oor en verwagtinge van die toekoms. Die studie is gegrond in 'n sosiaal-konstruksionistiese perspektief en het gebruik gemaak van 'n kwalitatiewe metodologie. Individuele onderhoude sowel as fokusgroepsessies is onderneem met 10 meisies tussen die ouderdomme van 14 en 18 jaar. Rustenburg is as geografiese area gekies weens die semi-landelike aard van die gemeenskap. Alhoewel landelike gemeenskappe dikwels as meer konservatief beskou word as stedelike areas spring hul nie moderniserende invloede soos die massamedia vry nie. 'n Onderliggende tema van die studie was dus om te bepaal of die meisies in Rustenburg nie steeds relatief konserwatiewe genderopvattinge het.

Die studie het bevind dat respondente nie meer volledig konformeer aan tradisionele rolle wat aan vroue toegeskryf word nie en graag nuwe moderne rolle wil kombineer met bestaande tradisionele rolle. Dit is ook duidelik dat die massamedia 'n groot invloed het in hierdie verband. Volgens die respondente word 'n vrou wat suksesvol is as goeie moeder, eggenoot en tuisteskepper sowel in 'n loopbaan hoog gewaardeer. Die meerderheid van die respondente wil hierdie meervoudige rolle vervul. Volgens die respondente is die voordeel van 'n loopbaan vir vroue daarin geleë dat hulle onafhanklik en finansieel selfonderhoudend kan wees.

Met betrekking tot genderverhoudings is bevind dat vriendskappe met meisies en seuns ewe belangrik is vir die respondent. Aan die een kant bestaan daar voldoende gemeenskaplike belangstellings om gemaklik met seuns te kommunikeer, terwyl interaksie met seuns aan die ander kant ook nuttige insigte bied in die lewêreld van seuns. Die algemene mening van die meisies is egter dat hul meer op hul gemak voel om persoonlike en intieme sake met hul meisievriende te bespreek. Daar is ook ondersoek ingestel na die verhoudings met jonger meisies sowel as faktore wat die gewildheid van meisies bepaal.

'n Gemeenskaplike toekomsverwagting van die respondente is dat hulle hul skoolopleiding wil voltooi en daarna tersiêre opleiding aan 'n universiteit of technikon wil ondergaan.

Hulle het egter uiteenlopende loopbaanverwagtings. Die meerderheid wil in die toekoms in die huwelik tree – met ouderdomme wat wissel tussen 25 en 30. Hulle wil ook kinders hê, maar slegs nadat hul gevestig is in 'n goeie loopbaan. 'n Belangrike besorgdheid oor die toekoms is egter of daar voldoende werksgeleenthede sal wees in die loopbane wat hul wil volg.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The importance of distinguishing between sex and gender has been emphasized by various scholars. According to Westheimer and Lopater (2002) sex is commonly used to refer to the biological designation of being either male or female. Sex refers to both the individual's genetic and anatomical composition. Sex is typically described as a biological given, determined by anatomical, hormonal, and chromosomal factors (England, 1993:153). Similarly Kimmel (2000) defines sex as being the biological apparatus, the male and the female – our chromosomal, chemical, anatomical organization. In contrast to sex, gender is conceptualised as a social identity – conceptions of masculinity and femininity constructed by culture and society (England, 1993:152).

1.1 GENDER, DIFFERENCE AND INEQUALITY

The emphasis on social and cultural location constitutes the core of the sociological approach. According to this approach an individual is located in both time and space and provides the social and historical contexts in which a person constructs his or her identity. The sociological perspective explains the ways in which our own experiences, our interactions with others, and institutions combine to shape our sense of who we are. Biology provides the raw materials, while society and history provide the context that we follow to construct our identities. Therefore this approach views gender as a social institution that is socially constructed and therefore historically and socially specific. I argue from a social constructionist point of view that neither gender difference nor gender inequality is inevitable in the nature of things, nor, in the nature of our bodies.

According to Kimmel (2000) any study of gender requires that the researcher/s explain both gender difference and gender inequality. Gender difference refers to the way in which society differentiates people on the basis of gender. Not only are women and men perceived to be different, gender is also used as a basis for the division of labour. Gender inequality refers to male dominance, the inequality of the gendered division of labour and the unequal distribution of social, political and economic resources between women and men.

The sociological approach to gender difference and inequality can be distinguished from a range of other perspectives, that is, the biological, cross-cultural and psychological approaches. Biological explanations hold a place of prominence in our explanations of both gender difference and gender inequality. Biological explanations have the ring of “true” science to them. Since their theories are based on “objective scientific facts” and their biological explanations seem to accord with our own observations. Biological arguments reassure us that what is is what should be, that the social is natural.

According to biological determinism (nature) women and men are biologically different, their reproductive anatomies and destinies are different and their brain chemistries differ. Their musculature is different. Different levels of different hormones circulate through their different bodies. Sex differences refer precisely to that catalogue of anatomical, hormonal, chemical, and physical differences between women and men. A large number of biologists believe that the differences in anatomy are decisive, and provide the basis for the differences in men and women’s experiences. Before the nineteenth century, most explanations of gender difference had been the province of theologians. God had created man and woman for different purposes, and those reproductive differences were decisive. Today, biological arguments draw their evidence from three areas of research: (1) evolutionary theory (for example, socio-biology and evolutionary psychology); (2) brain research; and (3) endocrinological research on sex hormones, before birth and again at puberty.

Insights drawn from anthropological research resulted from the questioning of the biological arguments regarding gender. Anthropologists draw attention to the cultural variability of conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Anthropologists believe that gender means different things to different people and that it varies cross-culturally. They argue that if the meanings of gender vary from culture to culture, and vary within any one culture over historical time, then understanding gender must employ the tools of the social and behavioural sciences and history (Kimmel, 2000:3). Anthropologists explained gender difference and inequality with reference to economic and political factors that influence the female status and male dominance. Their findings indicated that (1) male dominance is lower when men and women work together, with little sexual division of labour; (2) male dominance is more pronounced when men controlled political and ideological resources as well as property; (3) male dominance is higher under colonization, both capitalist penetration of the countryside and industrialization generally

lower women's status; (4) male dominance is also associated with demographic imbalances between the sexes, i.e. women's status is lower when there is a higher percentage of men to women; and (5) environmental stresses tend to exaggerate male domination.

Kimmel (2000) distinguishes between three approaches within the psychological perspective namely psychoanalysis, developmental psychology and social psychology and sex roles. Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, believed that "Anatomy is Destiny" (Kimmel, 2000:21). Freud believed that the anatomical differences between males and females made their personalities different. He went on to explain that these personality differences were not created at birth; instead these differences are influenced and affected by each individual's upbringing as well as their experiences from infancy onwards. Freud believed that gender identity was a crucial part of personality development. Freud felt that gender and gender identity were "acquired, moulded through interactions with family members and with the larger society" (Kimmel, 2000:66).

Developmental psychologists aim to investigate the psychological differences between males and females. Through various studies they have found only four areas with significant and consistent sex differences between the means of two distributions: (1) girls have relatively higher verbal ability; (2) boys have better visual and spatial ability; (3) boys do better on mathematical tests; and (4) boys were consistently more aggressive than girls. But they accounted for more variation among men and women than between men and women.

Most psychological experiments offer boys and girls an opportunity to perform similar tasks without labelling the tasks as gender-appropriate. In these contexts, males and females perform mostly alike. Thus gender typing appears to inhabit less in the child than in the environments in which the child find itself. The social environment is filled with gendered messages and gendered activities. Social arrangements constantly reinforce gender differences. In a gender-neutral experiment, social requirements are removed, and so the child did not behave in accord with a gender stereotype. Thus it appears that our gender beliefs are not internalized, instead our interpersonal and social environments ensure that our genders remain different.

Social psychologists attempt to understand the assemblage of attitudes, traits, and behaviours that constitute appropriate gender identity. In order to achieve this they have formulated an M-F (Male-Female) classification scale. This scale indicates both male and

females internal psychological identifications and external behavioural manifestations. Some academics argued that all children, both males and females, begin their lives as FF (female-female) in which they identify with and behave like their mothers. Boys then pass through the FM (female-male) phase in which they continue to identify with their mothers but also begin to acquire masculine traits and behaviours. Boys then reach the MM (male-male) phase and here they acquire internal identification and external behaviours that are gender appropriate.

This approach was criticized for viewing male and female roles as monolithic entities. When in fact there are a variety of different “masculinities” and “femininities” depending on class, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and region. Sex role theory only accounted for the normative prescriptions of sex roles, rather than the experiences of men and women themselves. This approach also ignored the issue of power. Any adequate explanation of gender must not only account for gender difference but also for male domination. This approach further ignored the relational nature of gender. What we know about being a man has everything to do with what it means to be a woman and vice versa. Finally this approach also ignored the institutional dimension of gender. Gender is more than an attribute of individuals; gender organizes and constitutes the field in which those individuals move. The institutions of our lives – families, workplaces, schools – are themselves gendered institutions, organized to reproduce the differences and the inequalities between women and men.

1.2 AIM, OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE

Using the sociological approach this study explores different dimensions of gender amongst a group of adolescent girls between the ages of 14 and 18 years living in Rustenburg, South Africa. More specifically it explores and describes the following aspects of gender amongst these girls: (a) how young adolescent girls living in Rustenburg perceive gender roles in general and how they perceive their own roles in particular (b) their gender relations with other adolescents and (c) their views on and expectations of the future as women.

The rationale for conducting this study relates to various considerations: (1) relatively little research on adolescents’ perceptions of gender roles and relations has been conducted within South Africa and (2) gender roles have been characterised by

significant changes over the last decades – worldwide as well as within South Africa. The rationale for selecting Rustenburg as the location for the study relates to its semi-rural character. While rural communities are generally perceived to be more conservative than urban areas they do not escape modernizing influences such as the mass media. The Rustenburg community was solely a rural farming community and the roles of men and women were traditional. The Rustenburg community is now undergoing significant changes due the expansion of the nearby platinum mining industry. Although Rustenburg is one of the fastest growing towns in South Africa it has not yet developed into a metropolitan city. An underlying theme of the present study is thus to ascertain whether or not the girls in Rustenburg still have relatively conservative perceptions regarding gender despite these changes.

1.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research method of this study was qualitative in nature. Qualitative data was collected from a group of high school learners living in the Rustenburg area. Individual assignments, open-ended interviews and focus group discussions were used to generate the qualitative data. Ten girls were interviewed. Thematic analysis was utilized to analyse the qualitative data and to explore the respondents' perceptions of gender.

1.4 ORGANISATION OF THESIS

The outline of thesis is as follows: chapter two presents a detailed overview of relevant literature. In this chapter I provide information from other research conducted on this theme as well as on how an individual's gender is constructed by varying factors such as society, culture and the media. Chapter three I discuss in more detail the research design and methods used in this study. In chapter four the findings of the study are presented and discussed. In the final chapter (chapter five) I present a brief overview of the findings of this study. The chapter also contains recommendations for future research as well as a critical reflection on the research process.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE OVERVIEW

The sociological approach that I have employed in the present study focuses on four dimensions of gender. These include (1) culture (2) institutions (3) interaction, and (4) identity as well as the interactions between these dimensions. Each of these dimensions will be elaborated on in this section. I also provide information from other research relevant for the present study and on how gender is constructed by varying factors such as society, culture and the media.

2.1 CONCEPTUALIZING GENDER

From an essentialist perspective (e.g. biological) gender is resident within the individual, a quality or trait describing one's personality, cognitive process, and moral judgment. Essentialist models thus portray gender in terms of fundamental attributes that are conceived as internal, persistent, and generally separate from the on-going experience of interaction with the daily socio-political contexts of one's life (Bohan, 1993:6). Many theories and empirical studies, for example the sex difference approach, treat gender as an individual attribute: masculinity or femininity inherent in a person. One problem with this approach is that conceptualising gender as an individual characteristic obscures the understanding of how it structures distinct domains of social experience. Sex differences become the explanation, rather than the analytic starting point.

Many scholars who take this perspective invoke socialization to account for how conceptions of masculinity and femininity are internalized. While these accounts acknowledge that sex differences may be learned, they suggest that by approximately five years of age, such differences have become fixed and immutable characteristics of individuals – like sex (England, 1993:153). With that, the distinction that was so carefully drawn is obliterated, as gender is effectively reduced to sex. It thus becomes difficult to account for variation in gender relations because the social meanings of sex are re-rooted to its biological underpinnings.

Essentialist perspectives on gender can be contrasted with social constructionist perspectives. Social constructionism is concerned with how people come to understand the world around them and with how they come to define reality (Beal, 1994:127). People actively construct their perceptions and use culture as a guide to do so. There are many

different ways that the world can be understood. One's understanding of the world does not reflect an absolute reality that is simultaneously experienced by all people and therefore different views of the world lead to different experiences of reality, which are equally real to the people who believe in them (1994:128). One's understanding of the world is a social product. Understanding involves a group of active, cooperative people who determine what constitutes reality. These understandings of the world are different across time and cultures. Investigators for example have found that ideas about the self vary across cultures. Some cultures conceptualize the self as an individual entity whereas other cultures conceptualize the self in relation to others or in terms of social roles. The social constructionist perspective argues that human beings are not passive recipients of a set of particular events in the environment. Instead, constructionists believe that humans are actively engaged in their perceptions and thus construct their view of the world.

According to Connell (2002) gender is a key dimension of personal life, social relations and culture. Being a man or a woman is not a fixed state. It is becoming, a condition actively under construction. The pioneering French feminist Simone de Beauvoir puts this in a classic phrase: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (2004:4). This 'becoming' follows many different paths, involves many tensions and ambiguities, and may produce unstable results. Part of the mystery of gender is how a pattern that on the surface appears so stark and rigid, on close examination turns out so fluid, complex and uncertain. People construct themselves as masculine and feminine. We claim a place in the gender order or respond to the place we have been given by the way we conduct ourselves in everyday life.

Connell defines gender as "the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices (governed by this structure) that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes" (2002:10). According to Connell gender is a matter of the social relations within which individuals and groups act. He says that gender should be understood as a social structure, that is, gender is a pattern in our social arrangements, and in the everyday activities or practices, which those arrangements govern. Gender as a social structure also involves a specific relationship with bodies. Society, in a variety of ways, puts reproductive difference into play. There is no fixed biological base for the social process of gender. Rather, there is an arena in which bodies are brought into social processes, in which our social conduct does something with reproductive difference. Connell (2002:10) refers to this as the

reproductive arena. Gender relations are the relationships arising in and around the reproductive arena. Not all gender relations are direct interactions; they may also be indirect – mediated for example by technologies such as television or the Internet. Gender relations are always being constituted in everyday life. If we don't bring it into being, gender does not exist. The structure of gender relations has no existence outside the practices through which people and groups conduct those relations. Structures do not continue, cannot be enduring, unless they are reconstituted from moment to moment in social action.

Gender is something actually done; and done in social life, not something that exists prior to social life. The history of gender includes the history of practices, and transformations of the body in practice. It includes the production and transformation of the categories of gender. We know these are not fixed; new categories (the homosexual, the housewife) appear and others decline. The history of gender includes the gender regimes of institutions and the gender orders of societies. The sexual division of labour was the first structure of gender. In many societies, and in many situations, men perform certain tasks and women perform others. Such divisions of labour are common throughout history and across cultures. But while gender divisions of labour are extremely common, there is not exactly the same division in different cultures or at different points in history. The same task may be women's work in one context, and men's work in another.

Sociologists focus on various dimensions of gender; these include (1) culture (2) institutions, (3) interaction, and (4) identity and the interactions among them. These dimensions will be elaborated on below.

2.2 GENDER AND CULTURE

According to the social constructionist perspective on gender, definitions of masculinity and femininity vary: (1) from culture to culture; (2) in any one culture over historical time; (3) over the course of a person's life; and (4) within any one culture at anyone time by race, class, ethnicity, age, education and region of the country. Thus social constructionism builds on the other social and behavioural sciences, adding specific dimensions to the exploration of gender. In explaining the cultural dimension of gender, scholars apply various concepts such as discourses, cognitive schemas, cultural norms, and worldview.

In Leahy's (1994) article she deals with the social construction of gender from a post-structuralist perspective. Post-structuralism sees people as gendered subjects who make choices within a range of socially available discursive positions, moulding and creatively adapting discourses as they act. A discourse refers to "a socially constructed system of statements – a linked set of terms, interpretations, meanings, evaluations, and causal analyses" (1994:51). There is no clear and automatic relationship between a discourse and social practices; social actors do not put into practice the ideas theoretically contained within discourses. Social practices are informed by discourses and the practices are themselves a part of the discursive field, in the sense that actions are situated within and enunciate specific discourses. From post-structural point of view individuals construct gender as an ongoing process by taking up positions from within a range of available and relevant discourses. This process is not stable or fixed at either the individual level or at the social level and continually operates to transform existing discourses and create new subject positions.

Bohan (1993) similarly emphasizes that among the most forceful of factors that shape our constructions of knowledge are the modes of discourse by which we exchange our perceptions and descriptions of reality. Thus, knowledge is a product of social interchange. What we call knowledge is simply what we agree to call truth. In the process of agreeing to the reality of a phenomenon, we construct precisely that reality. Gender, for instance, is not an actual, freestanding phenomenon that exists inside individuals, to be discovered and measured by social scientists. Rather, gender is an agreement that resides in social interchange; it is precisely what we agree it to be. Gender, from this understanding, is the meaning we have agreed to impute to a particular class of transactions between individuals and environmental contexts. One does not have gender; one does gender. The factors defining a particular transaction as feminine or masculine are not the sex of the actors but the situational parameters within which the performance occurs. Thus, none of us is feminine or masculine or fails to be either of those. In particular contexts, people do feminine, in others, they do masculine. Gender is not a trait inherent in individuals; rather, qualities usually seen as sex related are in fact contextually determined. Gender is revealed as simply the term given to a set of behaviour-environment interactions that we have come to agree characterizes members of one sex. The social construction of gender, which entails both agreements about sex-specific qualities and a belief in gender's intra-psychic nature, guides both our own behaviour and

our assessment of others. We take this construction as reality, failing to see its socio-historically situated nature.

According to Gergen (quoted in Beal, 1994:135-137) humans are highly reliant on cognitive structures such as schemas to construct their experiences. The gender schema is one of the ways that people understand and perceive women and men. It is a complex structure of information about gender. This information includes traits that supposedly describe women and men, and it also includes various subtypes of stereotypical males and females. The gender schema is important because it allows one to organize information about males and females; it also helps assign gender labels to social behaviour or social information. The individual with the help of a cultural gender schema socially constructs gender. The schema is learned at an early age because gender is a salient social category in the society. The schema is reinforced and maintained through various perceptual biases and through cultural mechanisms that may produce differences between the genders.

Therefore, the concept of gender can be defined in terms of cultural attributes that include both social and psychological elements that are learned and are expected of different sexes by society. This system of categorising people in terms of gender is instigated through the process of placing males and females in either a masculine or feminine grouping. Here, masculinity for example refers to strength and endurance, whereas, femininity refers to physical and emotional weakness. This view, therefore, implies that women are somehow inferior to men by nature. It is clear from this conceptualisation that the cultural beliefs about biological and social events are so strongly instilled within human understanding and behaviour that they almost appear inherent in human life. However, research on human culture has revealed that there is no predetermined correlation between natural human features and human social conduct. The only thing that links biology and social life is culture. This is because culture and its symbolic nature, influences the way people come to perceive themselves, that is, who they are and what they become (Andersen, 1983).

Finkelhor, Gelles, Hotaling and Strauss (1983) define culture as nothing other than a legacy, meaning that it is learned from previous human behaviour and passed on to the present generation, who then uses it as a guideline for behaviour. This process takes place through the implementation of cultural norms. These are prescriptions and activities that individuals within a certain cultural system must perform through interacting with others.

In order for these norms to be considered cultural, they must be shared by the whole society. These cultural norms, Mandela (1993) argues, are used to guide people's actions in most societies. These cultural norms are learned through the process of socialisation. An important aspect therefore of becoming a gendered human being is learning gender specific norms.

According to Bane Nsamenang (quoted in Bradford Brown et al., 2002:68-69) a worldview is a shared frame of reference by which members of a particular culture perceive or make sense of the universe and the place of the human being in it. Young people are obliged to construct a gender and ethnic identity consistent with the cultural scripts and gender demands of their worldviews. Peers are agents of their own socialization. Peers play a critical role in shaping their social skills and sharpening identities. A multi-age peer setting can also foster intergenerational transfer of cultural knowledge and skills. Peers create their own culture; they rehearse and enact adult roles. Young people use the peer culture to readdress and resolve some of the problems, confusions, and uncertainties that have come to the fore in their interactions with adults. In so doing, they attempt to transform confusions and ambiguities from the adult world into the familiar routines of peer culture. Thus, peers do not merely accommodate adult scripts, but are creative producers of meaning in their own right (2002:78).

2.3 GENDER AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Institutions are themselves gendered. For example, Erving Goffman (quoted in Kimmel, 2000:96) suggested ways in which public institutions produce gender differences. Goffman observed the use of public sex-segregated rest rooms, marked "gentlemen" and "ladies". He argued that it was unnecessary to have two separate rest rooms when both men and women use the same bathrooms within their own homes. Similarly the structure of the workplace reproduces the differences and inequalities between women and men in terms of role differentiation.

According to Bradford Brown, Larson and Saraswati (2002:6) young people are shaped in large part by the fundamental contexts in which they spend time. Institutions and experiences with other individuals within these institutions play a central role in shaping young people's experiences. Nuclear families are the most important contexts for young people's development. The nuclear family is the smallest social unit that offers

meaningful sociological interpretations of gender relations. Most nuclear families consist of members of both male and female sexes, old and young. At the nuclear family level, therefore, we have various levels of relations. It is at the nuclear family level that children learn their social relations within the nuclear family itself and outside it. Children also learn and develop attitudes, for example, who and what women are and their expected roles (Mbilinyi and Omari, 1996).

But the nature of young people's family experience varies enormously. Some young people grow up in close-knit, hierarchically organized, extended families that provide a web of connections and reinforce a traditional way of life. Others come of age in nuclear or single-parent families, with whom they may spend little time or have close, intimate relationships (Bradford Brown et al., 2002:6). Institutions such as schools, colleges and universities are also important context of many young people's lives as it gives young people the resources to prepare them for adulthood. Peers also offer young people valuable resources such as companionship, emotional support, and an arena in which to try out and learn important social skills. Therefore there is diversity in the outlook and experiences among the world's young people due to different family forms, school systems, cultural norms, and economic opportunities, access to health care, leisure activities, religious orientations and values, social changes, political and historical events. All of these can create different experiences for young people from one nation to the next or among different economic or social groups within a nation (2002:19).

Moreover, gender is about difference, inequality and power. Kimmel argues that power is the property of a group, not an individual and substantiates his claim that gender is as much a property of institutions as it is part of our individual identities.

Like gender, power is not the property of individuals, a possession that one has or does not have, but a property of group life, of social life. Power is. It can neither be willed away nor ignored. Power is neither attitude nor possession; it's not really a 'thing' at all. It cannot be 'given up'. Power creates as well as destroys. It is deeply woven into the fabric of our lives; it is the warp of our interactions and the weft of our institutions. And it is so deeply woven into our lives that it is most invisible to those who are most empowered (Kimmel, 2000:93-94).

At the level of gender relations, gender is about the power that men as a group have over women as a group, and it is also about the power that some men or women have over other men or women. This inequality is an important aspect of social institutions. Not only does role differentiation often exist between men and women in institutions such as

the family, education and economy – these institutions are also sites of power inequality between men and women.

2.4 GENDER: ACTION AND INTERACTION

Gender is plural and relational; it is also situational. What it means to be a man or a woman varies in different contexts. Those different institutional contexts demand and produce different forms of masculinity and femininity. Gender is thus not a property of individuals, something one has, but a specific set of behaviours that are produced in specific social situations. And thus gender changes as the situation changes.

Recent social theorizing on gender focuses on individuals' interactional and institutional doings. According to this approach gender is not merely an individual attribute but something that is accomplished through interaction with others. Some feminist scholars for example argue that the process of sex categorization (social identification as a woman or a man) is the ongoing identification of individuals as girls or boys and women or men in everyday life. Sex category serves as an emblem of sex, but does not depend on it (England, 1993:155).

Gender defines the social and the cultural meanings brought to each anatomical sex class. Children learn how to 'pass as' and 'act as' members of the assigned sexual category. The gendered identity is an interactional production. It is embedded in those interactional places (home, work) that give recurring meaning to ordinary experience. These are sites where emotional experiences, including sexual practices, occur. In them concrete individuals are constituted as gendered subjects who have emotions, beliefs, and social relationships with others. In these sites ideology – beliefs about the way the world is and ought to be – intertwines with taken for granted cultural understandings about love, intimacy, sexuality, the value of work and family, money, prestige, status, and the meaning of the good life (England, 1993:200).

Gender is thus not a 'thing' that one possesses, but a set of activities that one does. When we 'do' gender, we do it in front of other people; it is validated and legitimated by the evaluations of others. Gender is less a property of the individual than it is a product of our interactions with others. Gender 'is a relationship, not a thing' and like all relationships we are active in their construction. We do not simply inherit a male or female sex role,

but we actively – interactively – constantly define and redefine what it means to be men or women in our daily encounters with one another.

According to Westheimer and Lopater (2002:26) gender role refers to a wide assortment of expectable or appropriate thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of males and females. Expectable and appropriate are specific to one's socio-cultural environment. Feeling that you are required or expected to behave in a particular way because you are a man or woman occurs because gender role involves what is socially acceptable. Even without knowing it we may be influenced by these expectations. Our ideas of masculinity and femininity are based on gender roles. We understand that we do gender in every interaction, in every situation, in every institution in which we find ourselves. We need to think of masculinity and femininity not as a single object with its own history, but as being constantly constructed within the history of an evolving social structure.

Gender is further accomplished through individuals' interactions with friends. Friendships, according to Johnson et al. (1999) help adolescents to develop morally, psychologically and emotionally. Adolescent friendships satisfy the desire for intimacy, social interaction; sensitivity and understanding. According to Madriz (2000:839) "women have historically used conversation with other women as a way to deal with their oppression. Sharing with other women has been an important way to confront and endure their marginality". Most women have the need to talk, to be in the company of others and just communicate about anything, it is a connection, a form of bonding. Talking about particular things of interest helps some girls feel that they are not alone and that what they are going through is normal. This is substantiated by Beal (1994) in that she said that close, intimate friendships help the teenager cope with the self-consciousness of early adolescence through mutual emotional support. Friendships and socializing between girls help girls to realize that they have similar feelings and fears.

2.5 GENDER IDENTITY

Westheimer and Lopater (2002:26) refer to gender identity as one's self-awareness of one's maleness or femaleness and it develops gradually in a social context. According to Sunderland and Litosseliti (2002) social constructionists see identity as the result of affiliation to particular beliefs and possibilities which are available to them in their social context. However, this is not a question of determinism; these beliefs and possibilities can

be resisted. According to Giddens (quoted in Sunderland and Litosseliti, 2002:9) identity is a series of choices one continually makes about oneself and one's lifestyle. It is thus as a process, rather than a state or set of personal attributes. Identities can thus be seen as emerging from an individual's different forms of relationships with others and as, at least potentially, changing as their relationships change. Accordingly, gender identity can be seen as multiple and fluid, and never complete: the emergence and re-emergence of the self. They characterize masculinity and femininity as on-going social processes dependent upon systematic restatement, noting that this is sometimes referred to as "doing identity work".

Kimmel (2000) also suggests that gender is not fixed; it is flexible. An individual's gender can be influenced and shaped not only by their biological being, but also by the society and the history which provide the context in which an individual constructs his or her identities. On the one hand gender identity is voluntary, that is, one can choose to become who you want to be. On the other hand, however, gender identity can also be coerced, pressured, forced and sanctioned by the social institutions around us.

If one agrees that gender is socially constructed then one is required to locate individual identities within a historically and socially specific and equally gendered place and time. One has to situate individuals within the complex matrix of their lives, their bodies, and their social and cultural environments. Gender revolves around identity, interaction and institution. These processes and experiences form the core elements of our personalities, our interactions with others, and the institutions that shape our lives. These experiences are shaped by our societies, and we return the favour, helping to reshape our societies. We are gendered people living in gendered societies.

Frosh et al. (2000) argue that masculinity exists only in relation to femininity and that it is constructed, through everyday discourses. The general perspective which they adopt is that a person's identity is in fact something multiple and potentially fluid, constructed through experience and linguistically coded. In developing their identities, people draw on culturally available resources in their immediate social networks and in society as a whole. These resources are, generally speaking, strongly gendered, with males and females receiving different messages, being constrained differently, and having access to different codes.

Identity and gender consequently stand in a dynamic relationship to one another; gender identity is a central component in identity construction as a whole. Conversely, identities

of various kinds (ethnic, class, geographical etc.) are deeply infiltrated by gender issues. For example, “the experience of inhabiting the identity of a ‘black man (or boy)’ is likely to be different from that of a ‘white man (or boy)’ , but also different for a ‘black woman (or girl)’” (Frosh et al., 2002:5). The process of identity construction is therefore one upon which the contradictions and dispositions of the surrounding socio-cultural environment have a powerful impact. This is one reason why an individual may find it difficult to describe the sources and nature of his or her various identities.

2.6 GENDER AS LEARNED BEHAVIOUR

Among social scientists it is generally accepted that gender is a learned attribute. You are taught by varying social influences to behave like a woman or a man. Theories of cognitive development locate the trigger of gender development and gender identity formation slightly later in life than early childhood. These psychologists argue that children are born more or less gender neutral; that is, no important biological differences between boys and girls at birth explain later gender differences. As they grow, children process new information through cognitive filters that enable them to interpret information about gender.

The social learning theory seeks to explain the ways in which behaviour is learned through the observation of significant others. For instance, gender roles are learned through the observation of others, through social interaction and the media. Through modelling, these gender roles are transmitted and reinforced. As a result the observer (in most cases children) takes on the behaviour and then, automatically uses it in new circumstances and situations outside the home (Jouriles & Norwood, 1995; Holden, Geffner & Jouriles, 1998; Westheimer & Lopater, 2002; Beal, 1994). The modelling of gender roles takes place through the process of observational learning. Observational learning involves two processes: attentional processes and retentional processes (Bandura, 1973).

Similarly Kimmel (2000:3) argues that:

[Males] and [females] are different because [they] are taught to be different. From the moment of birth, males and females are treated differently. Gradually [they] acquire the traits, behaviours, and attitudes that our culture defines as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’.

Kimmel believes that individual boys and girls become gendered – that is, they learn the appropriate behaviours and traits that are associated with being a boy and a girl. Then, individually, they negotiate their own path in a way that feels right to them. The social institutions of our world – workplace, family, school, and politics – are also gendered institutions that reinforce and reproduce what a boy and a girl should be. They become gendered selves in a gendered society. For example Williams (2002) explored how girls in different communities negotiate the gender order and, in turn, how gendering shapes girls' transition into womanhood. Williams focused on the adolescents' gendering processes, which were described by the girls themselves who participated in her study. She referred to these gendering processes as 'trying on gender' (2002:30). These processes involved individuals' anticipation, experimentation, retreat and resistance of gender. Williams identified that social interaction was the salient focus in the doing-gender framework. Williams suggested that gender relations were fluid, mutable, and specific to certain circumstances or contexts (2002:32). Williams' findings indicated that girls firstly went through a process of trial and retrial as they constructed gender for themselves. Secondly, there were clear differences in how girls in each community tried on and did gender.

According to Goddard and Mean Patterson (2000) socialization is an extensive process and includes all the things we see and hear from society around us, the people we meet, the things we're told, the images we see, the books we read, and so on. These sources also give us information about identity, who we are, and what being a man or woman means. The process of socialization lasts our whole lifetime, which is one of the reasons we can change our views, and why both society and language change.

The communication media also has great influence in shaping people's minds. This emanates from the fact that the mass media creates public awareness and formulates opinions on issues of interest. Consequently, the communication media enhances the understanding as well as the reinforcement of a society's cultural norms and values. Communication and communication media, among other forces, appear to play an important role in the regeneration and reinforcement of the socio-cultural sphere of dominant gender relations and gender inequities (Mbilinyi & Omari, 1996).

Beal (1994) states that television and film are powerful media as they have the power to influence children's, adolescents' and adults' ideas about gender roles. Gender roles in the media (television, movies and magazines) are watched by the adolescent youth, who in

turn are influenced mentally and physically to accept that what they see is normal in our society. Adolescents are under pressure to conform to media standards. Beal's opinion is that the media is setting the standards of beauty and success. For example, magazines, television and advertisements tell the teenage girls how they should look, the different diets they can use, what cosmetics they should wear, what hairstyles are 'in fashion' and what cosmetic surgery they need.

According to Mazzarella and Odom Pecora (1999) media culture provides the materials out of which many people construct their sense of class, of ethnicity and race, of nationality, and of sexuality. Media stories and images provide the symbols, myths, and resources that help constitute a common culture for the majority of individuals in many parts of the world today. Girls are using mass media discourses on femininity as pathways to explore new permutations of class, gender, and racial meanings, even as societal and cultural uncertainty over what it means to be a woman increases. In spite of this emancipatory potential, it is also clear that these media discourses are being generated and framed in the context of traditional cultural representations as well as the strictures of a capitalist economy; thus, the possibilities for interpretation are limited by the codes with which these discourses are inscribed (1999:194). Girls accept media versions of girls' lives as more legitimate than their own lived experiences (1999:195).

Although young women today enjoy greater freedom and more options than their counterparts of a century ago, they are also under more pressure, and at greater risk, because of a unique combination of biological and cultural forces that have made the adolescent female body into a template for much of the social change of the twentieth century (1999:216). A survey on body image conducted in 1972 and 1985 by Psychology Today was again conducted in 1997, they asked their readers to respond to more than five pages of items related to how they see, feel, and are influenced by their bodies. The first 4000 respondents were included in the analysis. Overall more female respondents seemed to be dissatisfied with their bodies than ever before. Among young women aged 13 - 19, 62 % claimed they were dissatisfied with their weight, 44 % claimed it was from being teased by others, and 23 % claimed that movie or television celebrities had influenced them. It becomes clear that the readers are responding to some kind of cultural demand. The experience of girls as they move into adolescence can be seen as a kind of cultural mirror, reflecting back strategies for coping with the increasingly loud messages they are receiving about who the culture demands they should be.

Teenage girls are self-conscious and want to conform to the media's expectations of them. The strongest pressure on girls is to be thin, pretty and wear fashionable clothing and "the teenage girls respond to this pressure by spending time, money and energy on their appearances" (Beal, 1994:244). Watching movies and television programs related to women and families in general, and reading female magazines will also influence them and their perceptions of their gender roles.

According to Johnson, Roberts and Worell (1999) the dominant culture presents a certain female image as the ideal through advertising, and all girls are encouraged to aspire to and buy products to attain it. Johnson et al. (1999:358-359) discuss that there are many social and cultural developments and changes influencing the development and judgements of adolescent girls today. The first of these developments is that young girls now have increased sexual freedom due to various birth control methods. The second development is the change in the family structure caused by an increase in divorce, single headed households, and/or both parents working. The third development is the shifts in community life and the smaller family unit, which has led to a loss in support structures such as grandparents, churches and community support. The fourth development is that the economy and the workforce have changed; more women are working full time to help support their families than ever before. The fifth development is technological advancements in communication enabling mass information to be readily accessible and in turn enhances learning and performance. Career aspirations have advanced with technology and females can fit into these roles on an equal footing with men.

As a result of these factors a woman is no longer so restricted by the physical aspects of her biological role, but is held back rather by the attitude of society and her own inner inhibitions, which are largely a carry-over from a previous epoch (Meares, 1974:115).

Smith (1998) explores the different ways in which culture shapes and creates women through the media. She examines the ways in which women, who remain traditional, are rewarded for their feminine behaviour. Women who do not conform to the traditional feminine behaviour required of them are punished. She explains the subliminal differences between men and women. There are many more rules governing female behaviour than men's, and consequently it is much harder for a woman to be an individual - to act on her own desires and ambitions rather than conforming to the expectations of society.

The main difference between men and women in any culture is that they are treated differently. Different conditions are imposed on men and women such as their dress and the opportunities made available to them. Being a woman has moral consequences and making major and minor decisions regarding whether to work or not, how many children to have and whether or not they are going to look after elderly relatives. Women are judged for their actions, for example, having too few or too many children, for failing to raise them properly, for being a good or a bad wife et cetera (etc.). Women are expected to maintain their femininity, if she doesn't have children she is considered unfeminine. These and other cultural messages make women try to behave in a certain way. Differences between women generally mean inferior rather than different-but-equal.

According to Steiner-Adair (quoted in Gilligan, Lyons & Hanmer, 1990:167) recent literature on normal female adolescent development suggested that:

Girls were socialized to be unable to accept their bodies. On the one hand, adolescence presented girls with the challenge of coming to terms with their biological bodies; at the same time, society judged girls according to their looks, and the culture encouraged girls to struggle to change their bodies to fit a narrowly defined beauty ideal.

She argues that research reports on adolescent girls show that girls are more influenced and more vulnerable and rely on physical acceptance and feedback to help form their identities.

Girls make their bodies an all consuming focus and, as a result, engage in numerous body projects in an attempt to both fit some culturally imposed beauty ideal and to communicate their identities to others (Mazzarella & Odom Pecora, 1999:2). Today's culture inundates girls with messages that their bodies are their voices –their identities. A girl's identity is intricately linked to her physical appearance (1999:3). Girls' culture unfolds in the culture of the bedroom –experimenting with makeup, listening to music, reading magazines, sizing up boyfriends, chatting, jiving (1999:51). A girl's power, control and individuality rest's with her physical appearance – her femininity (1999:110). According to Kimmel (2000:124) physical appearance is tied to social definitions of masculinity and femininity. Girls are rewarded for their looks and for appearing attractive, while boys are more frequently rewarded for physical performance, and for being active. These differences continue well into adolescence. Girls are taught to

capitalize on good looks, cuteness, and coyness. Boys discover that athletic ability and performance are what count for males.

Nowadays, young people want to be thin and therefore place a high value on physical beauty and perfection. According to Romaine (1999:207):

Magazines such as Seventeen, with their emphasis on fashion, educate girls into consumerism and teach them to orient their appearance and sexuality to men. Their message, like those of similar magazines aimed at women, implies that female identity lies in their bodies and popularity with men.

The current standard for attractiveness presents a slimmer ideal for women than for men. Advertising's general overrepresentation of the young and beautiful is a symbolic statement about the value our society attaches to youth and beauty (Romaine, 1999:253).

The first goal of Carlson Jones' (2001) study was to identify the features that defined ideal attractiveness for adolescents. The sample included 42 girls and 38 boys in grade 9 and 10 of a public high school. The participants were 98 % white and middle to upper-middle class. The participants were required to write a description of their ideal image of attractiveness for both a teenage girl and for a teenage boy. The results confirmed that both same-sex peers and models/celebrities were the targets of social comparisons for physical attributes, but comparisons on personal and social attributes were more likely directed toward same-sex peers. Gender differences in social comparison indicated that girls reported more social comparisons across targets and attributes.

According to Mbilinyi and Omari (1996) societies are made up of classes i.e. political, social and economic etc. The dominant class which tends to be the one that controls the economy will have a dominant effect on influencing the views expressed in the media which in turn will create the cultural traits, structures and perceptions on the other classes in their society. The relations will reflect the dominant class' interests and ideas and the media will perpetuate them. These interests and ideas will not necessarily be the same as the less dominant classes' interests and ideas.

2.7 WHAT SOCIETY VALUES IN WOMEN

Gilligan, Lyons and Hanmer (1990) conducted research on the relational worlds of adolescent girls' attending Emma Willard School. One of her colleagues, Steiner-Adair (quoted in Gilligan et al., 1990), explored thirty 14 - 18 year old white adolescent girls'

perceptions of societal values toward women, cultural ideal images of women, and individual ideal images of women. She asked the girls the following questions:

(1) Thinking about our society today, what do you think society values in women?
(2) What is society's image of the ideal woman? (3) What does she look like? (4) What would make her perfect? (5) What is your own image of the ideal woman? The result was that two distinct patterns of responses emerged in the girls' answers to the questions. Steiner-Adair referred to these patterns as the 'Wise Woman' and the 'Super Woman'. The 'Wise Woman' pattern involves a sequence of (a) being aware that there are new cultural expectations and values toward women and then identifying specifically the new societal values of autonomy and independent achievement in career and looks; (b) identifying the societal image that embodies these values and challenging or rejecting the image; and (c) differentiating one's own ideal image of women from the societal image and making a choice of an ideal that is self-defined and self-orientated. The 'Super Woman' pattern consists of (a) not identifying exclusively with the new cultural values of autonomy and success in women but rather attributing to society the more traditional values of caring and sensitivity toward women and sometimes mentioning some of the newer values; (b) identifying the independent and autonomously successful Super Woman as society's ideal image; and (c) identifying with the societal image of the Super Woman as their own ideal image.

The results indicated that 60 % of the girls fell into the wise woman response pattern, indicating an awareness of the cultural expectations and values of a woman's autonomy and independent achievement in career and appearance, yet differentiating their own ideal from the societal image. The other 40 % of the girls responded with a superwoman response pattern, identifying the independent and autonomous superwoman as the societal as well as their own ideal. Steiner-Adair (quoted in Gilligan, 1990:166) states that in the last twenty years, women's values have changed as they have become more liberated and the teenage females of today are being "socialized to devalue the importance of relationships and to value independence and autonomy".

According to Yates (quoted in Beall & Sternberg, 1993) during the past three decades, we have witnessed a significant shift in the position of women within the culture. The improvement is largely due to the women's movement. This shift has brought women a new presence, a new power, but also some very high expectations for self-development. With their rise in status, women have come to demand a great deal of themselves. Many

women want to achieve professionally, gain a place of respect in the community, marry and raise a child or two, and handle any problems that arise, competently and efficiently, by themselves. Women's proven ability to succeed, shoulder to shoulder with men, has certainly affected the adolescent girl's perception of herself and her anticipation of what she should be able to accomplish in adult life. If she is to live up to her self-expectations, she will need to be independent, assertive, persistent, and a perfectionist. If she is to succeed in the male arena, she must be able to speak out in groups, attend college away from home, and compete openly with men. These demands can occasion considerable anxiety. However, many young women have learned to master their anxiety and move toward greater autonomy and self-reliance (Yates, 1993:157). As a group, women have become more effective and more powerful than ever before. With this, some adolescents have begun to adopt extraordinarily high self-expectations for independence and achievement (1993:166).

In conjunction with the above, Meares' (1974) predicted how he felt women would change in the future (21st Century). He described the New Woman as being the product of the social evolution, which is going on around us. He explained that with the evolutionary changes in society so too changes would occur among the people within that society. The New Doctor would be more intelligent, more scientific, and less compassionate. Fathers would be more tolerant, more passive, and less punishing and girls would be more sophisticated, more self-reliant, and less dutiful. These changes in people alter their way of life. They develop new satisfactions in living, new stresses and worries, and above all they evolve new patterns of interaction with their fellows. He strongly felt that the process of social evolution would change the character of women and he explored these changes. He predicted that the New Woman would have an impact on the society in which she lived, moulding it and changing it with her very own ideas. Women are more influential today than they were in previous decades. "Women have achieved equality under the law, the right to vote, the right to equal pay for equal work, better working and living conditions, and the right to control their own reproductive systems" (Bottaro, Calland, Oelofse, Visser & Winter, 2001:68). Women have become empowered which has enabled them to enter the job market and their valued input and experiences are definitely having a direct effect in transforming society.

These are the characteristics that make up the New Woman; she is trying to make a better life for women, above all she is striving for equality of opportunity with man to enjoy a

full life, and she seeks the right to make decisions for herself, the right to determine her own destiny. The New Woman's first demand is for equality and Meares indicated that this was equal opportunity thus satisfying her need to develop her own potential and as a result in her gaining material success, wealth and status. The change, which the new woman is now making, is from the home into the larger life, from the biologically primitive role of childbearing and mothering into the more sophisticated life. The New Woman is focused and concentrated in the pursuance of a career. She aspires to achieve to her full potential. Her increased knowledge and intellect also causes a counter effect in that anxiety levels, nervous tension, frustration and stress also increase which in turn decreases her physical, psychological and mental health as well as her tolerance levels. The New Woman seeks stimulating conversation. She has a practical style of dress. She has the choice whether to marry or not and marriage is of less significance and importance than it was a century ago. She may be in many relationships or cohabiting and may even have children out of wedlock. She believes in equality and sharing. She regards herself as being sophisticated, efficient, self-assertive, self-sufficient, determined, striving, competent and decisive. She seeks greater freedom and independence as she feels that dependence is seen as an inferior position. She is more aggressive, harder, competitive, less tender and conscious of her equal status with men.

2.8 FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

In their study Frosh et al. (2002) offer a description and exploration of emerging masculinities in the early teenage years. They began their research in 1997 and focused on 11 - 14 years old boys in London schools. Their study entailed an in-depth exploration, through individual and group interviews, of the way boys in the early years of secondary schooling conceptualise and articulate their experience of themselves, their peers and the adult world. They further investigated the boys' aspirations and anxieties, their pride and their loss. As such, their research has offered an unusually detailed set of insights into the experiential world inhabited by these boys – how they see themselves, what they wish for and fear. They were particularly interested in research that addressed the topic of boys' experiences by allowing them to speak about it openly and in detail.

These researchers also interviewed 24, 11 – 14 year old girls individually about boys so that they could compare these with boys' accounts of themselves and their gendered

relations. These girls were interviewed by a woman who asked them a range of questions about their perceptions of and relationships with boys, for example, about whether they thought girls and boys were different or similar; about mixing with boys and what this was like; and about boyfriends and boys as friends. The girls' accounts provide a different perspective on boys and also give some insight into the resources girls draw upon in constituting their own identities.

O'Donnell and Sharpe (2000) explored the different and contrasting attitudes of boys and girls to marriage, family and relationships. They had drawn data from a previous study, referred to as the 'girls study', of 14 - 15 year old girls at four Ealing schools carried out by Sharpe and three of these schools were included in the boys' survey. This research took place in 1991 to update an earlier study in 1972 of girls' attitudes and expectations about education, work and marriage. What they found was that social changes and the impact of feminism and women's liberation have radically altered the lives of girls and women in and out of the home. These social changes have affected women and girls more than it has affected men and boys. Women's and girl's attitudes have changed towards commitment and marriage. Girls still wanted to have relationships and families but had lower expectations for marriage. The girls placed emphasis on work and independence.

Later studies showed that the girls were aware of high divorce rates and the hardships faced by single mothers, and they indicated that they wanted equality in their relationships and in their families. The women also showed an increase in their control of fertility and economic independence and on the ability to exist without men, bringing up their children independently and achieving a reasonable economic status.

In the changing world some women are capable of earning what can be considered as a man's salary. There is no longer the same pressure put on girls to marry or to stay married as there was previously. The research showed that in 1972 the girls wanted to be office workers and this way could accommodate their work with their home life. In the 90s this had changed and the girls were no longer satisfied with working in an office or being a secretary; they had greater expectations. Because the job market is erratic, both genders will experience unemployment. Even so most high school leavers are optimistic that they will get work in the labour market.

Similarly, Kritzinger (2002) conducted focus group interviews with 32 coloured girls between the ages of 15 and 17 years living on farms in the Boland and Wineland regions of the Western Cape and explored teenage girls' views and experiences of farm life and

their expectations of the future. In examining their expectations and assessing their life chances these teenage girls appeared to reject farm life and foresaw a future far removed from their working-class background. Most of the girls want to get married and stay at home and look after their children if they can financially afford it. A few consider the possibility of running a business from home in order to accommodate their children's needs. Others feel that if one has invested in education, one should work on a full-time basis. Most of these girls hoped to settle down with a successful husband, to be financially well off, to have a small family of their own and a successful career, own a big house and a car, travel, and, very importantly, to live in a large town or city. The views of these teenage girls regarding their future roles challenge the traditional conceptions of the female role that is, being a wife and mother.

Similarly, Mendelsohn (quoted in Gilligan, 1990), one of the colleagues who conducted research on the relational worlds of adolescent girls attending Emma Willard School, asked the participants to respond to the following questions:

(1) How would you describe yourself to yourself? (2) Is the way you see yourself now different from the way you saw yourself in the past? (3) Who is someone you admire? (4) What does it mean to be a young woman today? (5) When you think about your life in the future, how do you imagine your life in terms of work and relationship?

These questions enabled the researcher to examine how the girls see themselves and their futures. The interviews showed remarkable similarities in the responses concerning how they describe themselves, what sorts of qualities they admire, and what they believe it means to be a young woman today. Almost all of the girls portrayed the same ideal. They admire and seek to become someone who is "responsible, independent, outgoing, understanding, confident, striving and enthusiastic" (1990:234). All thirty girls wanted to work after college, they all wanted a boyfriend, most wanted to get married at approximately 25 years of age and have children at a much later stage in the future. Half the girls wanted to continue their careers after they had children, the other half wanted to stay home and raise their children. Half of the girls think that they would probably like to interrupt their careers in order to devote themselves to raising children. Most saw this as being temporary, and many wanted to remain self-supportive throughout marriage. A popular strategy for managing career and family was to establish a career or work before starting a family, then leave work for some time. Largely unaddressed were the problems likely to be associated either with giving up hard-won meaningful careers for family life,

or with obstacles to being able to come and go from work commitments at will in order to raise their own children.

Without exception, the girls interviewed express interest in having successful careers; this was important for their future image. While most were vague about the particular careers, relationships, and life-styles they envisioned, there tended to be greater clarity and concreteness concerning their future work than future marriages and families. For most of the girls it was easier to imagine living as an adult with a job than it was to imagine living a married life. In fact, of all the aspects of the future that was considered, marriage itself tended to be the activity that was most vaguely or ambivalently treated. Work and children appeared to be more substantial and perhaps more reliable components of adult life than marriage. As most of the girls indicated that they wanted to be independent the researcher asked them to explain what independence meant to them as she felt that the girls did not use it in a context that meant being "unattached or on one's own, unconnected to other people" (1990:245). What she found was that most of the girls wanted to be self-supporting throughout their marriage and be independent, meaning that they could meet their own needs. Mendelsohn felt that the women's movement has given girls a sense that they have something special to contribute to the future. She found that the girl's valued relationships but they still had individual ambition. They also felt that they could bring value to their own lives.

In Johnson et al's (1999) study the adolescent girls who want to work were found to have little interest in traditional family roles and expected to delay marriages and preferred to follow their chosen professions with fewer interruptions, such as pregnancies. Way (1995) also explored, qualitatively, the ways in which 12 urban, poor and working-class adolescent girls spoke about themselves, their relationships, and their school, their futures, goals and expectations over a three year period. The ability to be outspoken or to 'speak one's mind' in relationships was identified as the most prevalent theme in their interviews. Although theory and research concerning adolescent girls indicate that adolescent girls begin to silence themselves in all their relationships at early adolescence and continue to maintain their silence throughout adolescence, the girls in Way's study challenge such assertions. These girls suggest that adolescent girls may become not only increasingly silenced but also increasingly outspoken.

Schmidt, Klusmann, Zeitzschel and Lange (1994) conducted a research project in order to determine the changes in adolescents' sexuality between 1970 and 1990 in West

Germany. Based on two studies using semi-structured interviews of 16 and 17 year old West German urban adolescents, the first in 1970 and the second in 1990, the researchers aimed to identify any changes in the young people's sexual behaviour and attitudes during the past two decades. What they find was that girls in the 1990's were far less prepared to accept the traditional division of roles within the family than the girls in the 1970's were; a great majority of them demanded the right to have a profession of their own and to share the household and child-care chores equally with their partners.

The World's Youth 2000 report gives a profile of South African youth, providing data on population, education, and health. Overall, young people's health and educational prospects are improving, and marriage and childbearing are occurring at later, more mature stages of life, compared with previous generations. With regards to education, recent world conferences have called for universal access to and completion of primary education, and for reducing the 'gender gap' – differences in boys' and girls' enrolment – in secondary education. Policymakers increasingly recognize that advancing women through greater educational opportunities is the key to economic and social development. With regards to marriage, the report indicates that the age of marriage is one of many aspects of young people's lives that are currently in transition. In sub-Saharan Africa, the proportion of married adolescents has decreased over the last 20 years. Nonetheless, at least one-fourth of 15 to 19 year old women are married in many sub-Saharan African countries, and about half of 15 to 19 year old women in Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Chad, and Uganda are married. Marrying later in life has a number of implications for young people. Young women who marry later are more likely to have a basic education than those who marry early. Subsequently, women with more education tend to be healthier and more prosperous, and have fewer and healthier children.

This chapter has attempted to provide some background on how individuals' gender is constructed by varying factors such as society, culture and the media. In the remaining chapters, the focus will be on the study I conducted with a group of multi-racial female adolescents in Rustenburg in an effort to ascertain how they perceive gender roles in general and how they perceive their own roles; their gender relations with other adolescents; and their views on and expectations of the future as women within the South African context. The next chapter (chapter 3) outlines the methodological steps that were followed in order to achieve the above-mentioned goal and objectives.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

According to Willig (2001:8) methodology identifies “a general approach to studying research topics” and method refers to “a specific research technique” used for gaining data. The term method also implies “a data generation process involving activities that are intellectual, analytical and interpretive” (Mason, 2002:52). Taylor and Bogdan (1998:3) elaborate on this and refer to methodology as “the way in which one approaches a problem”. Researchers apply various techniques, depending on what kinds of problems they are trying to find solutions to. The methodology that one chooses to utilise in research is largely dependent upon the assumptions, interests, purposes and the research topic.

There are two well-known approaches to social inquiry that have been used over the years within the social sciences, namely: quantitative and qualitative research methods. This study aimed to explore and describe, from the perspective of a multi-racial group of female adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18 years within the geographical area of Rustenburg, how young adolescent girls perceive gender roles in general and how they perceive their own roles; their gender relations with other adolescents; and their views on and expectations of the future as women.

In this chapter, the research design and methods of collecting data utilised in an effort to achieve the above goal and objectives will be outlined in detail.

3.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AS OPPOSED TO QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Before going into a discussion of the approach employed in this study, I believe a background overview of the quantitative and qualitative research methods is necessary if one is to make an informed and appropriate decision on the method for a study. Although the study was a qualitative investigation, a discussion on both the quantitative and the qualitative methods respectfully is useful because it provides an understanding of how they both approach social life.

Two major perspectives have been influential and dominated the field of social science over the years, namely: Positivism and Phenomenology / Interpretivism. Positivism has been associated with the quantitative paradigm and Interpretivism with the qualitative

paradigm. Maykut and Morehouse (1994:4) define a paradigm as a “set of overarching and interconnected assumptions about the nature of reality”. In other words, in their efforts to make sense of the world, social scientists have come up with ideas and explanations that require further systematic testing through the application of certain methods.

3.1.1 The quantitative paradigm

Quantitative researchers believe that reality exists out there and is determined by fixed natural laws. Therefore the goal of science should be to discover the nature of reality and how it truly works with the aim of predicting and controlling natural phenomena. When studying social phenomena, the scientists carefully divide and study its parts (variables) so as to understand the whole. Thus the structure and direction of research will converge onto this reality so that it can be controlled and manipulated (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In simplistic terms quantitative research is the collection of data in the form of numbers (Neuman, 2000:33).

This paradigm has its foundation from the positivist school of thought. Positivism suggests that there is straightforward relationship between the world (objects, events, phenomena) and our perception, and understanding, of it. Positivists believe that it is possible to describe what is ‘out there’ and to get it right. Such a position is also referred to as the ‘correspondence theory of truth’ because it suggests that phenomena directly determine our perceptions of them and that there is, therefore, a direct correspondence between things and their representation. Positivism emphasizes that the external world itself determines absolutely the one and only correct view that can be taken of it, independent of the process of circumstances of viewing. A positivist epistemology implies that the goal of research is to produce objective knowledge, that is, understanding that is impartial and unbiased, based on a view from ‘the outside’, without personal involvement or vested interests on the part of the researcher (Willig, 2001:3).

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:645) the positivism paradigm is explained as a metatheory that is based on the key assumption that the social sciences should follow the lead of the natural sciences and model its own practices on that of the successful natural sciences. This research paradigm emphasizes the practice of searching for universal laws

of human behaviour, the quantification in measurement and requires a distance between the researcher and the research subjects.

The positivist theory is based on three principles; the first principal is the empiricist theory of knowledge i.e. the primary source of data is to be found in experience and observation through ones senses. The second principal is the naturalist interpretation of objectivity, i.e. to clear ones mind of any pre-set ideas and to approach the object of study with a clinical and value-free attitude so as to obtain objective research through clinical, neutral and controlled research. The third principle is that of the Humean conception of causality, which refers to the empirical regularities that one, obtains between variables that can be observed and measured. Causality is what one infers from looking at the repeated co-variation between observable variables. Therefore, the primary source of all knowledge is to be found in experience and observation, and thus the main data for social research is the observations that one makes through one's senses (2001:27).

According to Higgs and Smith (2000:14) logical empiricism is "the method of enquiry in philosophy which is concerned with the meanings of words and sentences" and emphasizes logic and precise meanings of words and sentences to determine if each is true or not. In everyday life, one uses one's senses and one's experiences to establish facts and to check facts. This is the most reliable form of knowledge and information one has. Empiricism means experience and is concerned with establishing the truth by means of scientific testing. Through these empirical tests one can determine if facts are true or not through the five senses i.e. sights, touch, smell and taste. In order to determine if something exists, one must experience it through one's senses, and in order to determine if something is true or not it has to be scientifically tested.

Furthermore, within the positivist paradigm, data collection is required to be conducted in accordance with the experimental quantitative methods of the natural sciences. Positivism requires that the research be aimed at predicting, describing and analyzing human behaviour through observation and the findings are required to be objective, unambiguous, quantifiable and intersubjectively reproducible. Examples of data collection within the positivist paradigm include; surveys, experiments and structured interviews.

According to Breakwell, Hammond and Fife-Schaw (1995:231) structured interviews involve a fixed set of questions, which the researcher asks the respondents in a fixed order. The respondents are then required to select an answer from the fixed series of

options provided by the researcher. The structured interview yields information which is easily quantified and that can be compared across respondents. However the structured interview does not make room for unanticipated discoveries and thus respondents often feel constrained because they are not free to give the information, which they feel is important.

3.1.2 The qualitative paradigm

Whereas positivists conceptualise the plight of social science as striving to understand social phenomena through studying social facts, interpretivists focus on studying the individuals who take part within the system where these social facts function. According to this perspective, understanding social phenomena from the point of view of the actor, the individual within a particular culture or environment, should be the focal point of social science.

Qualitative researchers are interested in how people make sense of the world and how they experience events. Qualitative researchers are concerned with the quality and texture of experience, rather than with the identification of cause-effect relationships. They do not tend to work with variables that are defined by the researcher before the research process begins. This is because qualitative researchers tend to be interested in the meanings attributed to events by the research participants themselves. Using preconceived variables would lead to the imposition of the researcher's meanings and it would preclude the identification of respondents' own ways of making sense of the phenomenon under investigation. The objective of qualitative research is to describe and possibly explain events and experiences, but never to predict. According to Higgs and Smith (2000:113) "phenomenology claims that human beings and the world interact with each other the whole time, the one influencing the other". Thus, it is concerned with what it is that makes people who they are as human beings and aims to describe and understand human action, researched through observation from an insider perspective. Qualitative researchers study people in their own territory, within naturally occurring settings (such as the home, schools, hospitals, the street etc.). Qualitative data collection techniques need to be participant-led, or bottom-up, in the sense that they allow participant-generated meanings to be heard. They need to be open-ended and flexible enough to facilitate the emergence of new, and unanticipated, categories of meaning and

experience (Willig, 2001:15). In qualitative research, the objective of data collection is to create a comprehensive record of participants' words and actions. This means making sure that as little as possible is lost in translation. As a result, qualitative data tends to be voluminous and hard to manage. Qualitative researchers have to wait for the data analysis phase of the research before they can begin to reduce the data (2001:16). Qualitative research is concerned with meaning in context. It involves the interpretation of data. The role of the qualitative researcher requires an active engagement with the data, which presupposes a standpoint or point of departure. This means that qualitative research acknowledges a subjective element in the research process (2001:141). Qualitative research provides the researcher with an opportunity to study meanings. It allows the researcher to tap into the perspectives and interpretations of participants (2001:150).

Through qualitative research one can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social process, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate (Mason, 2002:1). Qualitative research is based on methods of data generation, which are both flexible and sensitive to the social context in which data is produced. Qualitative research is based on methods of analysis, explanation and argument building, which involve understandings of complexity, detail and context. Qualitative research aims to produce rounded and contextual understandings on the basis of rich, nuanced and detailed data. Furthermore, within the Interpretivist paradigm, data collection such as interviews is based on interpersonal interaction. Interview data consists of meaningful statements that are interpreted and expressed in language. These statements can be ambiguous, contradictory and the findings may not be intersubjectively reproducible.

The positivist and interpretative paradigms exhibit similarities and differences in certain aspects. Positivism and quantitative research methods logically imply each other while interpretivism logically implies qualitative research methods. According to Smaling (1992:4) these two paradigms are said to correspond respectively to the following two ontological points of view: man as a mechanism, robot or organism, and man as a person, interpreter or communicator. These two paradigms represent two different frameworks within which human behaviour and experience may be constructed. Within the empirical-analytical paradigm quantitative research methods are paramount, while in the interpretative paradigm qualitative research methods are paramount, although both of

these paradigms do make use of quantitative and qualitative research methods, respectively.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Since the main interest of the study is on the views and perceptions of a multi-racial group of female adolescents on gender roles, gender relations, and future expectations as women, it is understandable that qualitative methods would be the best option. I found that qualitative research suited my quest to obtain subjective, personal data pertaining to the research question, as the research paradigm is exploratory and descriptive in nature. The next section of the chapter will focus on how I, as the researcher, applied the qualitative methods in order to meet its objectives, that is, the research design of the study.

Qualitative studies are known to be explorative and descriptive in nature. The researcher seeks to discover the process, meaning and understanding obtained through words or pictures. Here a general focus of inquiry is developed with the aim of exploring and describing the perceptions, views and attitudes, with regards to gender roles, gender relations and future expectations as women, of female adolescents'. Qualitative methods are regarded as the most effective tools, if the researcher is interested in how people, in their environment, experience reality (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

According to Willig (2001) qualitative researchers are concerned with the quality and texture of experience, rather than with the identification of cause-effect relationships. They do not tend to work with variables that are defined by the researcher before the research process begins. This is because qualitative researchers tend to be interested in meanings attributed to events by the research participants themselves. Using preconceived variables would lead to the imposition of the researcher's meanings and it would preclude the identification of respondent's own ways of making sense of the phenomenon under investigation.

3.3 THE RESEARCH SETTING

Qualitative inquiry should be implemented within a natural setting (Neuman, 2000). The construction of reality cannot be removed from the context where it is experienced. This

is because people derive meaning from their environment in as much as they do from themselves. Qualitative research in a natural setting requires the researcher to take into account all factors and influences of a certain environment.

I initially chose a particular medical centre as the venue in which to conduct the individual interviews as there was a consulting room that was not being used at the time. Fortunately I was given access to this venue through an acquaintance. I felt that this setting would be ideal as there was very little noise and no room for interruptions. The centre was also in closer proximity and easily accessible to the participants. I only conducted three interviews at the centre, as the participants appeared to look uncomfortable. It is also a fairly clinical and sterile setting. I then decided to conduct the rest of the individual interviews as well as the focus group discussions at my home in my study/lounge, which appeared to be quite successful as the participants were less nervous, and the setting less formal which enabled them to relax as if they were in their own homes.

3.4 METHODS OF COLLECTING AND ANALYSING DATA

In this section, I will discuss and describe the methods used to generate data for the study. I will also discuss and describe thematic analysis that I employed to analyse the information generated from these methods. I made use of three methods of generating data. These include individual assignments; qualitative interviewing and focus group discussions. These methods will be discussed in more detail. I will discuss some characteristics of qualitative interviewing and focus group discussions in general in an effort to elucidate as to where these methods fit in to the qualitative paradigm.

3.4.1 Sampling/selection of participants

In Qualitative research, the goal is to select a sample, which will allow a researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how people experience a certain phenomenon. Therefore, the sampling procedure is purposeful in that the researcher carefully selects those individuals whom they believe can yield information on the particular phenomena from their own experiences of it. There are two types of sampling methods, probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is the primary method for

selecting large, representative samples for social science research, whereas non-probability sampling is used in research situations where probability sampling is impossible or inappropriate. Examples of non-probability sampling include; reliance on available subjects; purposive or judgemental sampling; snowball sampling; and quota sampling.

The type of sampling selected depends upon the researcher's focus and judgements about whether such methods can generate information that is appropriate for the study. The sampling strategies that I have selected are availability sampling and snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a form of accidental sampling and is appropriate when the members of a special population are difficult to locate so data is collected from a few of the located members of the target population and these individuals are asked by the interviewer to suggest additional people for interviewing. These individuals then provide the information needed to locate other members of that population whom they happen to know and so the process continues and accumulates as each located subject suggests other subjects (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:167).

An important limitation of this particular sampling strategy is the lack of generalizability. This technique proved to be useful for my study because participants were difficult to locate and access. Inclusion criteria for interviews and focus group discussions were that (1) they were female adolescents from the Rustenburg district, aged 14 to 18 years and (2) they volunteered for interviews and focus group discussions and (3) they provided contact details. In my study I gained access into High School One (Private School) with the help of my younger brother, who attends this school and is presently in Grade 11. He spoke to some of the girls in his grade (availability sampling), introduced my study and asked those who indicated interest to volunteer. I then asked these individuals to suggest names of people who would also be interested, so that I could approach them. They suggested other individuals within their school as well as High School Two (Public School). Both High School One and Two are the only English high schools in Rustenburg.

Those girls who were interested in volunteering to participate in my research wrote down their names and surnames, home and cell phone numbers and gave these details to my brother who then passed them on to me. I then initiated telephonic contact with each of the girls that had listed their details and introduced myself and explained my study to them. I assured the participants that they were free to withdraw at any time from

participation in my research. I also assured the participants that all information disclosed to me would be confidential.

I was successful in obtaining ten volunteers five of whom were sampled from High School One (Private School) and the other five from High School Two (Public School) (these High Schools chose to be anonymous). I then proceeded to send each of the girls a consent form (See Appendix A) informing each of them what my research would entail. Their parents were required to sign this document before I could continue with my research. As indicated above three data gathering methods were employed in the study. All 10 of the participants volunteered and consented to (1) hand in an essay, (2) agreed to individual interviews and (3) participate in the focus group discussions. Unfortunately two of the girls were unable to attend the focus group discussions as they had other commitments. The participants' comprised of six White girls, two Black girls, one Indian girl and one Coloured girl. The demographic profile data of the participants is presented in chapter four.

3.4.2 Individual assignments

As noted in 3.4.1. participants were first required to complete an individual assignment. This assignment required them to write an essay on the following topic "What is it like to be a girl in Rustenburg?" I analysed each of the participants' essays according to the general guidelines that were set out in the consent form (See Appendix A). The general guidelines included: (1) what it is like for the participants to be girls in Rustenburg; (2) participants' general views of women's roles; (3) participants' roles at present; (4) participants' leisure patterns, interests and hobbies; (5) participants' relations with others; and (6) participants' future expectations as women. The topics were further explored and elaborated on in the individual interviews and the focus group discussions.

What I hoped to gain from giving these girls this task (individual assignment) was a glimpse into their world, where I could attempt to understand them as girls, how they projected themselves within the essay, what they specifically focused on in their essays, their views and opinions of being a girl and living in Rustenburg, what Rustenburg is like for them and what is available to them in Rustenburg with regards to entertainment and leisure etc. I also felt that it would help to get these girls thinking about who they are, to make them more aware of themselves and what they stand for being girls as well as

encourage them to become more aware of their surroundings. Furthermore, by giving the girls this task and starting with an open-ended question, their own opinions, ideas, views, thoughts and issues came to the fore, which allowed me to expand on these issues which they themselves felt, were valid and important. I also felt that initially, to start with, it would be easier for the girls to express themselves by writing their thoughts down on paper as they could complete the task within their own time and in the comfort of their own homes without feeling pressurised, giving themselves voices where if it was an individual or group discussion, they would have perhaps chosen to keep silent.

Once I had analysed each of the essays I arranged to meet each of the participants individually for their interviews. I made use of individual interviews in order to clarify and explore what each of the participants had written in their essays, thus obtaining feedback on patterns that were emerging and in turn using their feedback to establish further questions in the interviews as well as the focus group discussions. The following is a brief discussion on qualitative interviewing and its usefulness in qualitative research.

3.4.3 Individual interviews

The interview that is made use of in qualitative research is sensitive to the human situation, and captures the experiences and lived meanings of the subjects' everyday world through open communication between the researcher and the respondents.

According to Hunt and Eadie (1987), although an interview is a form of communication, it is unique because it is a planned conversation with a pre-established purpose and structure. Purpose here refers to the fact that one person in the dialogue poses questions to the other with the aim of obtaining their opinion on a certain subject. The structure, on the other hand, refers to the pattern of the interaction. In an interview session, the pattern is usually structured in such a way that one person drives the discussion in a specific direction and pursues specific issues, topics and experiences raised by the respondent. However, even though the person who asks questions is considered to be the leader in the discussion, the one who provides answers does most of the talking. The style is conversational, flexible and fluid (Mason, 2002:225).

Information gathering is said to make qualitative interviewing more stimulating and very useful (Rubin & Rubin, 1996). It gives the interviewer access into the worlds of the people they are studying. This is because through qualitative interviewing, the researcher

is able to discover how people feel, think and interpret the events that occur in their worlds. It also enables the researcher to later describe and reconstruct these events without having to take part in them or experience them.

In addition, qualitative interviewing comes in two formats, which can be adopted by the researchers depending on their research objectives. For instance the interview can be unstructured where by the researcher has a number of topics to cover but the precise questions and their order are not fixed, they are allowed to develop as a result of the exchange with the respondent. Here the researcher conducts the interview in such a way that it becomes an open discussion that is not restricted by specific questions. The primary aim is to allow the interviewee to express their views freely. Open-ended answers allow the interviewee to say as little or as much as he or she chooses. Comparability across respondents is sacrificed for the sake of personal relevance.

The interview can also follow a semi-structured format in which the interviewer has more specific questions. Although the researcher does not entirely restrict the interviewee with specific questions, they use the questions to guide the interview in a certain direction for the sake of obtaining answers to some issues (Rubin & Rubin, 1996). Interviews conducted with the participants in the present study were semi-structured. According to (Willig, 2001:22) semi-structured interviewing requires careful preparation and planning. The researcher needs to think about who to interview (and why), how to recruit participants, how to record and transcribe the interview, what style of interviewing to use, and what to ask participants. The questions asked by the researcher function as triggers that steer the interview to obtain the kind of data, which will answer the research question. The interviewer needs to find the right balance between maintaining control of the interview and where it is going, and allowing the interviewee the space to re-define the topic under investigation. A carefully constructed interview agenda can go some way towards ensuring that the interviewer does not lose sight of the original research question. The semi-structured interview is, however, somewhat ambiguous. This is because it combines features of the formal interview (e.g. fixed time limit; fixed roles of interviewer and interviewee; the existence of an interview agenda) with features of an informal conversation such as the open-endedness of the questions and the emphasis on narrative and experience. To be able to carry out a full analysis of the data, it is necessary to audio or video record and transcribe the interviews. Most qualitative methods of analysis require that the materials transcribed verbatim, or near verbatim. It is important that the

researcher explains why the recording is being made and how it is going to be used (2001:25).

Interviews also complement other studies by contributing background material to them, and can be used to complement further research studies. Interviews enable the researchers to clarify questions that are not understood by the respondents, the researchers are also able to reflect back to the respondents to clarify what they have just heard. The respondents are then given the opportunity to agree with or correct the researchers if their interpretations are incorrect. The interview also permits the researcher to probe respondents by asking questions such as "How is that, in what ways, how do you mean that, and what would be an example of that?" Silence is sometimes also an excellent means of getting respondents to participate within the interview.

According to Breakwell et al. (1995:230) research interviews require a very systematic approach to data collection, which allows one to maximize the chances of maintaining objectivity and achieving valid and reliable results. Interviews can be used at any stage in the research process. They can be used in the initial phases to identify areas for more detailed exploration. They can be used as the main vehicle of data collection. They can be used once findings have been compiled to check whether ones interpretation of other data make sense of the sample, which was involved. Interviews are thus infinitely flexible tools for research.

In the present study the interviews took place at the Medical Centre in one of the consulting rooms that was not being used at the time. I felt that the setting would be ideal as there was very little noise and no room for interruptions. The interviews were an extension and elaboration of the girls' essays and varied in length. I also made use of this method in order to obtain more in-depth detail on each of the participants. I used this opportunity to clarify and query what each of the participants' had written in their essays, thus obtaining their feedback on patterns that were emerging and in turn using their feedback to establish further questions in the interviews as well as the focus group discussions. The individual interviews also provided a neutral ground for the participants' and I to meet, one-on-one, and face-to-face for the first time. This enabled each of us to get to know one another a little better. It further assisted in easing the participants' nervousness. It was hoped that this would ensure that the participants' would feel comfortable around me and discuss things openly and freely, as they would know what

they could expect from me in the focus group discussions. The following is a brief discussion on focus groups and their usefulness in qualitative research.

3.4.4 Focus group discussions

According to Willig (2001:29) a focus group is really a group interview that uses the interaction among participants as a source of data. Here, the researcher takes on the role of moderator whose task it is to introduce the group members to one another, to introduce the focus of the group and to gently steer the discussion. Focus group discussions involve a group of people getting together to discuss specific issues. They are focused in that participants are involved in a common, collective goal. Focus group discussions, according to Barbour and Kitzinger (1999), are distinct from any other group interviews. They utilise interaction for a purpose, that is, to generate information. Here the group facilitator / researcher does not concentrate on individual participants by asking specific questions, but encourages them to communicate with one another by sharing ideas, asking each other questions, and exchanging points of view regarding the topic as presented by the facilitator. Therefore, what makes focus group discussion effective in facilitating an environment, which allows a free flowing interaction among members, is the emphasis on the communication process during the discussions. This is because the kind of communication that occurs in focus groups is based upon the same patterns of communication, which people utilise when discussing issues when gathering in a group situation (Albrecht, Johnson & Walther, 1993). Hence in a group discussion, members do most of the talking to one another with opinions that trigger other opinions; focus groups are able to use group dynamics to capture information and to obtain insights that might not be accessible in other ways (Morgan, 1997). There is a three-part process of communication i.e.: (1) The researcher decides what she needs to hear from the participants; (2) the focus groups create a conversation among the participants around these chosen topics; and (3) the researcher summarizes what she has learned from the participants (Morgan & Krueger, 1998:1).

Focus group discussions can be used in various ways by researchers, depending on the focus of the study. First they are used as a self-contained method i.e. as the main method of data collection. Second, they can be supplementary methods in quantitative studies. Third, they can be used in multi-method studies that mix various methods for the purpose

of data saturation. In this study, focus group discussions were employed as a multi-method. I created an interview schedule (See Appendix B) based on the general guidelines set out in Appendix A that were expanded on from the individual assignments and individual interviews. The general guidelines/topics were refined into three main themes with each theme's related questions. The three main themes are; gender roles, gender relationships and future expectations as women. Due to the fact that qualitative research encourages one to make use of different methods I decided to incorporate group discussions as I felt that it would perhaps be easier for the participants' to come together in a group and have open discussions on the three main themes. Moreover, as a researcher, I took a non-directive approach in which I played the role of a facilitator leading open-ended discussion with the participants, encouraging the flow of interaction among the participants of each group and picking up themes that came up when the participants spoke about their gender roles, their gender relations and their future expectations as women.

Within the first focus group discussion I made use of the poem 'Fifteen', by Miranda Rajah (date unknown), and Frosh et al's (2002) photo exercise. The poem was utilized with the intent to firstly establish whether or not the participants could relate to the girl in the poem, as most of them were 15 years of age and older, and secondly to determine whether or not the participants were experiencing the same things at this particular point in their adolescent years.

In conjunction with the poem I further implemented Frosh et al's (2002:276-277) photo exercise. The participants were required to select the following types of photographs and/or pictures; (a) two which showed someone who was most like them, (b) two which showed someone who was least like them, and (c) two, which showed someone they would most like to be like. They were asked to give reasons for their choices. Both the poem and the photo exercise will be elaborated on in chapter four.

According to Lesch (2000:90) "memo writing can help the researcher to elaborate processes, assumptions and actions that are included in her codes. It entails looking carefully at categories and identifying underlying components. It helps one to flesh out and explore categories". In the present study, I made use of memo writing after analysing the individual essays and the transcripts of both the individual interviews as well as the focus group discussions. It served as a device to contain my thoughts and ideas about the emerging themes. Memo writing allowed me to note and document additional

explanations and various thoughts, questions, patterns and insights etc. that came to mind when I was analysing the data.

3.4.4.1 The advantages of focus group discussions

According to Madriz (2000) focus groups allow access to research participants who may find one-on-one, face-to-face interaction scary or intimidating. By creating multiple lines of communication, the group interview offers participants a safe environment where they can share ideas, beliefs, and attitudes in the company of people from the same socio-economic, ethnic, and gender backgrounds. The focus group is a collectivistic research method where different races, from different environments, with varying opinions collectively interact and discuss a topic, sharing a kaleidoscope of ideas, opinions, beliefs and experiences. The researcher's participation within the focus group discussion is minimal and thus does not lead the group discussion in a particular direction but allows the participants to decide the direction and content of discussion if it pertains to the research topic. The presence of the researcher is essential in order to facilitate the discussion. Madriz further argues that "focus groups involve not only vertical interaction or interaction between the interviewer and the interviewees, but also horizontal interaction among the group participants" (2000:840).

Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) add that focus groups as an open interaction allows participants the opportunity to react to and confirm the responses of others. This in turn, may trigger the expression of ideas that might not have been obtained from individual interviews. This open interaction also has the benefit of yielding large and rich amounts of data in the participant's own words in a quicker and more cost effective manner.

According to Fern (2001:13) a major advantage of focus groups is the dynamic nature of the process because each focus group session is actually an individual research project in itself. It is possible to change the research from group to group in order to benefit from the learning of the early sessions and improve the quality of the output in the later ones.

3.4.4.2 The disadvantages of focus group discussions

Focus groups have the disadvantage of, sometimes, taking place outside of the settings where social interaction typically occurs and thus may be thought of as unnatural.

Therefore attention must be given to creating the right atmosphere and environment for free and open discussions.

Given the necessary presence of a facilitator, it is difficult to determine how genuine the social interaction in a focus group really is due to the fact that the presence of the researcher may also alter the behaviour and the responses of the participants. It is extremely important that the facilitator is relaxed, open and friendly so that the discussions are not inhibited by their presence. In order to counter this Flick (1998) suggests that researchers should use their power as moderators in the following ways: (a) through formal direction of the discussion where they control the agenda of the speakers from the beginning, middle and end of the discussion; and b) steering the topic, that is, introducing new questions and leading the discussion in a certain direction which is relevant to the subject matter.

The data collected from the focus group discussions is wide and general and thus very little in-depth detail is gathered from each participant. To minimize this negative aspect the triangulation of methods can be utilized.

According to Greenbaum (2000:120) focus group reports should contain a brief caveat that identifies the limitations of qualitative research.

It should be noted that the focus group methodology is qualitative and exploratory in nature and is not intended to provide data that are projectable to a stated universe. Focus groups are designed to elicit reactions from participants about a particular topic and to generate ideas and concepts that will help the client to understand a subject area. The output from focus groups also is often helpful in developing hypotheses and parameters to be included in a quantitative study. Never should the results from focus group research be considered representative of any population segment or a point of view of a specific target universe. The non-random method of recruitment and the small size of the sample do not permit this type of observation.

3.4.4.3 Implementation of focus group process

Knodel (1993) emphasises that careful thought and consideration is crucial with regards to the design of focus groups. Therefore, it would be useful at this point to describe the steps involved in the process of developing successful focus groups. Knodel (1993) says that depending on the purpose of the study, the characteristics of the target population and the number of discussions to be held, the design of focus groups can be approached from two extremes. On the one hand, a more flexible approach can be adopted, which follows a stepwise style where the target population and the number of discussions change as

fieldwork advances. On the other hand, researchers can use a more detailed design that is set in advance. The latter is said to be useful when the researcher has a specific issue to examine and will need to do an extensive analysis on the data. I would argue that in the present study I adopted a more detailed design. Instead of conducting the focus group discussions at the Medical Centre I opted for an informal setting, my study/lounge. I felt that it was a more natural setting that would encourage normal and casual social interaction between the participants in each group. This proved to be quite successful. The tape recorder was strategically placed under the table so as not to make the participants too much aware of its presence. I also made use of a flip chart on a stand, which I placed in one of the corners of the room, visible to the participants, which I used to summarize their comments. The flip chart also enabled the participants to visibly see, comment, and give feedback on what they had said. I have also incorporated the flip chart data in my memo writing and theme analysis. I hope that this informal setting would encourage light, yet serious and friendly conversation. In both focus group discussions the participants seemed very comfortable. They could sit wherever they chose as long as it was in close enough proximity of the tape recorder. Transport, snacks and facilities were all provided for.

3.4.4.3.1 Setting objectives and formulating guidelines

According to Knodel (1993) the first step in designing focus groups involves the clarification of objectives through the definition of broad concepts to be examined in detail. These concepts are put together as asset of discussion guidelines. This is meant to assist the researcher in laying out the issues for the group to discuss. For instance, in the present study, I made use of an interview guideline/schedule in which I outlined three main themes with their relevant questions. The themes included (a) gender roles, (b) gender relations, and (c) future expectations. In an attempt to keep the discussion focused and to gain more insight from the participants I decided to divide the discussions according to the three themes I outlined above. Hence in the first focus group discussion the theme gender roles was extensively discussed. In the second focus group discussion both the gender relations and future expectations themes were discussed. The latter theme did not require an extensive discussion due to the limited number of questions that the participants had to discuss.

3.4.4.3.2 Targeting participants

Another benefit of clarifying objectives and formulating concepts is that it enables the researcher to best decide on the characteristics of the individuals who are to be approached for the discussions. It is said that participants in a focus group discussion are not systematically selected through random sampling, but on the basis of the relevance of their contribution to the research topic (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson, 2001). As mentioned before, participants in the present study were selected by means of availability and snowball sampling techniques. However, efforts were made to ensure that all of them were female and between the ages of 14 and 18 years. Due to the participants' school timetables and all their extra mural activities it was very difficult to get them to attend a focus group during the week. Weekends were also out as the participants' needed some time to relax, so we all agreed on the coming holiday (20/06/2003 – 15/07/2003) as they would have lots of free time and fortunately none were going away on holiday.

3.4.4.3.3 Data collection procedure

The focus group discussions were recorded through the use of a tape recorder in order to ensure data accuracy. Data was captured from in-depth focus group discussions with eight female participants from the Rustenburg district, between the ages of 14 and 18 years. The group compositions for the discussions were as follows: Group one, comprised of four white participants' sampled from School One. Group two comprised of one white, one Black, one coloured and one Indian participant, sampled from School Two. Both of these groups comprised of four participants. No other individuals were willing to participate voluntarily. The size of the two focus groups are small but I avoided having one large group because of the difficulties it may have posed for handling the discussion and keeping the conversation focused on the research theme. It was easier to group the participants in this way as they are the same age and in the same grades and have similar school timetables and afternoon activities. It was also easier to pick the participants up from one school as each group was picked up twice from school at lunchtime on alternate Friday afternoons. The normal practice in social research, especially when comparing views of people with different backgrounds or attitudes on a subject, is that discussions

are held separately with each group being homogenous in its composition with certain similar characteristics such as gender, race, etc. (Knodel, 1993). According to Fern (2001:17) “homogeneous respondents are more likely to provide similar responses to the moderator’s queries whereas heterogeneous groups increase the diversity and range of positions taken on issues that are discussed”. The fact that Group One is homogenous and the participants within this group are sampled from High School One, and the participants in Group Two are sampled from High School Two, and each of them knew each other this may have had a direct influence on the data. Two discussions were held with each group, which amounts to four discussions for part of the data collection process. With the permission of the participants, the discussions were taped and later transcribed.

Two focus group discussions were conducted with each of the two groups. The first focus group discussion covered theme one i.e. gender roles. The second focus group covered both theme two i.e. gender relations and theme three i.e. future expectations as women. Each of the themes was discussed at length by both of the focus groups. Each of the focus group discussions were transcribed and analysed prior to the next focus group discussion so as to ensure that if something was misunderstood or needed clarifying that it could be done prior to commencing with the next focus group discussions.

Before the focus group process, participants were given consent forms to fill in as a way to ensure that their parents gave them permission to participate in the discussions. The individual interviews as well as the focus group discussions were conducted and transcribed in English.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Mason (2002:238) “a text can be anything from a literary text, an official document, or an interview transcript through to a photograph, a movie or a building”. In the present study the analysis units are segments of text, i.e. the participants’ individual assignments / essays on “what it is like to be a girl”; and transcripts of the participants’ individual interviews and focus group discussions.

Thematic analysis focuses on identifiable themes and patterns of living and/or behaviour. According to Barnard (Internet, date unknown) thematic analysis describes and organises data and aims to “understand” rather than “know”. It is driven by theory (deductive) or by data (inductive). In the present study thematic analysis was driven by data i.e. the

individual assignments and the transcripts from the individual interviews and focus group discussions. The data is read looking for themes that arise. The analysis combined techniques set out by Aronson (1994) and Barnard (Date unknown).

- The first step is to collect the data. Audiotapes should be collected to study the talk of an ethnographic interview.
- Read each transcript several times. Each time new insights will probably arise.
- From the transcribed conversations, patterns of experiences can be listed. This can come from direct quotes or paraphrasing common ideas.
- The next step to a thematic analysis is to identify all data that relate to the already classified patterns. All of the talk that fits under the specific pattern is identified and placed with the corresponding pattern.
- Use right margin to note anything interesting or significant. Some of these comments may be summarised.
- Use left margin to note potential themes arising i.e. key words that capture the intuitive essence of what is written.
- The next step to a thematic analysis is to combine and catalogue related patterns into sub-themes. List emerging themes and look for connections between them. Three to five main themes are usual.
- Write a memo that describes the scope of each main theme.
- Build a valid argument for choosing the themes.

Disadvantages

- Time consuming.
- Rigor i.e. dependability, plausibility, and reliability may be difficult to demonstrate.
- The data may be too little or too superficial to allow full thematic analysis.

Advantages

- Provides meaningful and organisational structure.
- Rich, insightful and complex.
- Based in a theoretical approach.

- Is the basis for theory generation.

What emerged from the essays and the individual interviews are the following topics:

- Their interests and hobbies
- Family
- School
- Friends
- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Peer pressure
- Socialising with both boys and girls
- Dating
- Teenage pregnancy
- Safety issues with regards to violence, crime and rape
- Views on women and how their traditional roles are changing in the twentieth century.
- What their roles are at present
- How women are still perceived and classified by men as the weaker, submissive and subordinate sex.
- Future expectations

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998:131), themes are defined as “units derived from patterns such as conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings, or folk sayings and proverbs”. Themes that emerge from the informants’ stories are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience. The “coherence of ideas rests with the analyst who has rigorously studied how different ideas or components fit together in a meaningful way when linked together” (1985:60). The further analysis and interpretation of the focus group discussions will be discussed in chapter four.

3.6 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

In a natural setting, humans are the best instruments when it comes to making observations and obtaining reliable and rich information. In this case what makes data valid is the fact that humans have the advantage of longer observation once access has been secured. The natural settings are also unfixed and thus require flexibility. However, the human instrument is said to possess the qualities, which enable them to cope with uncertain situations. This is because humans are responsive, that is, they are able to sense, react to, and interact with personal and environmental signals. They also have the capacity to adapt to whatever situation they find themselves in. In a research situation, this means that they can collect information about manifold factors and levels at the same time. Holistic emphasis is another function humans can perform. It refers to the ability to grasp everything about the phenomena under study (Neuman, 2000). This indicates therefore that the researcher has a very important role in the field. This also means that as an instrument they cannot take on a neutral stance both in the field and during their interaction with the people they are studying. They must rather take or be allocated certain roles and positions. This is a process that is negotiated by the researcher and the participants'. My role in the field was that of an observer and facilitator of interaction during discussions of the subject matter. Negotiating my role in the field required me to familiarise myself with the participants'. By establishing rapport and interpersonal relationships with the participants distrust is neutralized. I established rapport, trust and a relationship with each of the girls that participated in my research through regular telephonic contact throughout data collection. I also made use of 'warm-up' sessions. I refer to the period between 13:30 pm and 14:30 pm as the 'warm-up' session. This period was used prior to the individual interviews as well as the focus group discussions. I personally picked up the girls, both groups alternatively, on Friday afternoon after school at approximately 13:30 pm where we then proceeded to have lunch and started each discussion at approximately 14:30. In this 'warm-up' period the participants become familiar with each other and me as the researcher. The conversations are informal and participants talk about their week at school, their homework and what their plans are for the weekend. This period helped make the participants' more comfortable and ensured that the interaction between the participants' in each group was genuine. In this way we both got used to each other's presence and gradually they began to trust me. The

interviews and focus group discussions were also only scheduled for approximately one to two hours respectively but were terminated when information became redundant or when the participants started to repeat themselves.

3.7 DEPENDABILITY, CREDIBILITY, TRANSFERABILITY AND CONFIRMABILITY

In order to determine the usefulness of quantitative research four criteria are used to judge its accuracy, these criteria include internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity. In order to determine the usefulness of qualitative research alternative criteria are used and reflect those criteria used in quantitative research. The qualitative research criteria include: (1) dependability, (2) credibility, (3) transferability, and (4) confirmability. The qualitative research criteria will be discussed in terms of each of their usefulness when applied to qualitative research methods.

3.7.1 Dependability

According to Morgan and Krueger (1998) “the goal of qualitative research is to understand and communicate, not to control or replicate a study” (1998:64). Babbie and Mouton (2001:646) define reliability as the “measurement method that suggests that the same data would have been collected each time in repeated observations of the same phenomenon”. The usefulness of applying the term reliability to qualitative interviewing sets the basis prior to and after an interview has been conducted.

Qualitative research is only reliable if it is dependable i.e. the interview can be repeated with the same or similar respondents in the same context and indicate similar findings. In order to estimate reliability the researcher needs to take account for the changing context within which the interview is taking place that way the researcher can describe the changes that occurred and how these changes affected the interview.

An interview schedule needs to be looked at in its entirety. An interview schedule must also be tested and refined this can be done by interviewing a small sample of people to test whether your explanation for the interview is understood by a small sample drawn from the same population as you intend to interview. The Headmistress of School One checked my interview schedule.

According to Gregory (2000:407) “interview reliability can be increased substantially if a panel instead of a single interviewer jointly conducts the interview. Structured interviews in which each candidate is asked the same questions by each interviewer also prove to be much more reliable than unstructured interviews”.

Every effort has been made on my part to ensure reliability; I held all four focus group discussions in my study / lounge and tried to maintain the same atmosphere within the room. I personally picked up the girls, both groups alternatively, on Friday afternoon after school at approximately 13:30 pm where we then proceeded to have lunch and started each discussion at approximately 14:30. All four of the discussions took place on a Friday afternoon at approximately the same time of day i.e. 14:30. I personally conducted each of the focus group discussions and each group was asked the same questions in the same order and I attempted to ask the questions in the same manner.

3.7.2 Credibility

Babbie and Mouton (2001:648) define validity as “describing a measure that accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure” or “the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration”(2001:122).

When validity is applied to qualitative interviewing, the methods or procedures are only valid if they are credible i.e. if “there is compatibility between the constructed realities that exist in the minds of the respondents and those that are attributed to them” (2001:277) i.e. the participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results. I asked each of the participants to verify and clarify their comments, which were visible to them on the flip chart. According to Morgan and Krueger (1998) flip charts prepared by the moderator during the group discussion, can be helpful in capturing the range of participant responses, or in summarizing differing points of view. The flip chart allows participants to observe what is being recorded and, if necessary, to modify, revise or verify those comments. Following the focus group, these flip charts are helpful in retrieving the key points.

I was concerned about the quality of the information and that the results be a valid reflection of how the participants felt and thought about each theme. I’ve taken several steps to ensure the validity of the results. The interview schedule was hand delivered to

the Headmistress of School One so that she could check each theme and the questions related to each of the three themes to ensure that they were understood. I also asked her if she thought that the questions were appropriate and whether she thought the girls' understanding of the topics was sufficient for them to be able to answer the questions. I've listened to participants in advance of the study to provide the conditions needed for free and open sharing. I spoke to my colleagues and asked them for their opinions and views on my venue and gleaned information on their venues and the atmospheres they were trying to create for the interviews they were conducting. Initially I was going to conduct the individual interviews as well as the focus group discussions in a classroom at each of the schools. What came from the discussions with my colleagues is that the classroom environment would be more formal and may inhibit the participants from speaking freely about things not pertaining to the school curriculum. The classroom is large and formal with the desks set out in rows giving it a disciplined, rigid, orderly type of atmosphere. Moreover the consulting room at the Medical Centre did not open itself for loud group discussions and was thus restrictive in the sense that the participants were quiet and spoke softly. From these venues one expects authentic, serious and efficient discussions to take place. I wanted a natural environment in which the participants could afford to be themselves and to speak freely. I wanted the discussions to be informal, friendly and relaxed and thus opted for the discussions to be held in my study / lounge. I've listened carefully to participants, observed how they answered, and sought clarification on areas of ambiguity. Then, at the conclusion of the focus group, I asked participants to verify their summary comments visible to them on the flip chart. In summary, I've followed the accepted protocol to ensure that my results are trustworthy and valid. The actual words of participants, not instruments, are used to find out their feelings, thoughts, or observations about the topics of discussion.

3.7.3 Transferability

The qualitative interview is only transferable to the degree in which the findings or the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. This study is not intended to generalize. Focus group research is conducted to gain a more complete understanding of a particular topic, or just how certain people think about an issue or topic. My goal was to go "in-depth" into a topic, and therefore, I spent a

considerable amount of time conducting research with a small number of people. A person who wants to use the results should give thought about whether or not the findings can transfer into another environment. This decision is made by examining the research methods, the audience, and the context and by considering if these situations and conditions are sufficiently similar to the new environment (Morgan and Krueger; 1998).

3.7.4 Confirmability

The qualitative interview is only confirmable to the degree to which others can confirm the results. The measuring instrument in qualitative research consists of an individual without the support of standard instruments or baseline criteria. The observer must use his or her feelings, curiosity, hunches, and intuition to explore and understand the setting. This may pose as a problem because the qualitative researcher may have become immersed in the setting and may well adopt the perspective of the key informants and bias the results (Dooley, 1995). At the same time, the researcher must also retain an outsider's scepticism in interpreting the data. In practice, the analyst must switch back and forth between these perspectives, checking for consistencies and inconsistencies among the various informants and observations.

Triangulation refers to the use of various vantage points in the research process. It allows for flexibility and a diversity of experience. Triangulation may include employing a combination of methods, investigators and theories (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1995). I made use of method triangulation, which is the use of multiple methods of data collection to reduce sources of error as each method has limitations, a combination of appropriate methods may address the limitation of any one method. I made use of the following techniques:

- Individual assignments / essays.
- Interview transcripts, transcribed verbatim.
- Focus group discussions, transcribed verbatim.

I have approached this study recognizing the importance of one guiding principle: systematic procedures. Throughout the study, I have used accepted systematic procedures for data collection, data handling, and data analysis. I have used field notes and electronic recordings to capture the comments, which were then reviewed and used in the analysis

process. During the individual interviews and focus group discussions, I would ask participants to explain their view if I did not clearly understand what was said. Following the clarification I offered a summary of key findings that participants verified. I transcribed verbatim each individual interview as well as the focus group discussions.

This chapter outlined, in detail, the methodological procedures that were followed during the data collection and analysis phase of this study. In particular, the reasons for choosing a qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, approach to research were presented. The following chapter will present and discuss the findings of the study, which were collected and analysed using qualitative procedures.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Quotations from the transcripts will be presented in chapters four with the aim of giving each participant a voice in the presentation of findings. It is important to note, however, that the quotations cited in this presentation have been obtained from different discussion sessions with different groups. It is also important to note that pseudonyms were used to identify each participant through out the presentation. The aim was to ensure anonymity.

In order to provide a more detailed picture of the participants' background, the following summary of each participant's personal profile is presented:

PERSONAL PROFILES

Jewls: She is a white, 14-year-old female who attends a private school in Rustenburg. She is the only child. Both of her parents are employed. She lives in a middle class suburb and her interests and hobbies include dancing, hockey, art and playing piano. Her expectations for the future include furthering her education at a university or technikon and obtaining a degree.

Sky: She is a white, 15-year-old female who attends a private school in Rustenburg. She has a brother. She is middle class and lives with her family on a farm. Both of her parents are employed. Her interests and hobbies include gym, sports, hockey, photography, wildlife and analysing dreams. Her expectations for the future are to further her studies and obtain a degree.

Chloe: She is a white, 14-year-old female who attends a private school in Rustenburg. Chloe has a brother and a sister. Only her father is employed. She is middle class and lives on a farm. Her interests and hobbies are hockey, swimming and horse riding. Her expectations for the future include travelling and studying.

Tori: She is a white, 15-year-old female who attends a private school in Rustenburg. She has a brother. Both of her parents are employed. She lives

in a middle class suburb and her interests and hobbies include music, playing guitar, and art, sport such as swimming and squash and gym. She hopes to attend university to obtain a degree.

Dawn: She is a white, 17-year-old female who attends a private school in Rustenburg. She has a brother. Only her father is employed. She lives in a middle to upper class suburb and her interests and hobbies include dancing, art, fashion/modelling, photography and the outdoors. She would like to further her studies at university and obtain a degree.

Elizabeth: She is black, 18-year-old female who attends a college in Rustenburg. She has a brother and two sisters. Both of her parents are employed. She lives in a township and her interests and hobbies include watching television and reading magazines. Her expectations for the future include completing a degree and getting a well-paid job.

Britney: She is a white, 15-year-old female who attends a public school in Rustenburg. She has a sister. Only her father is employed. She lives in the C.B.D. of Rustenburg and her interests and hobbies include dancing, listening to music, watching television, playing hockey and shopping. She would also like to attend university and obtain a degree.

Halle: She is a black, 16-year-old female who attends a public school in Rustenburg. She has a brother and a sister. Her mother is employed. Halle lives with her family on the farm. Her interests and hobbies are singing, dancing, writing songs, athletics, playing netball and hockey. She hopes to further her education.

Lana: She is a coloured, 16-year-old female who attends a public school in Rustenburg. She has a sister. Only her father is employed. She lives in a middle to upper class area. Her interests and hobbies include dancing, shopping, music and hanging out with her friends. Her expectations for the future include furthering her education at a University.

Belle: She is an Indian, 14-year-old female who attends a public school in Rustenburg. She has a brother and lives with her family in a middle class area. Only her father is employed. Her interests and hobbies are hockey, acting, running cross-country, playing piano, reading, cycling and playing computer games. She would also like to further her education at a university.

There are three themes and two focus group discussions: one theme was focused upon during the first focus group and two themes were focused upon in the second focus group.

In this section the participants' perceptions of gender roles, their gender relations with other adolescents, and their views on and expectations of the future as women which emerged through the focus group discussions are presented.

4.1 GENDER ROLES

In the first focus group discussions the participants are firstly asked to define "what a girl is". Secondly, they explore their own feelings, ideas, expectations, fears and disappointments with regards to the poem 'Fifteen', which I briefly referred to in the methodology chapter (chapter three). The participants further discuss (i) what society values in women; (ii) the character and qualities that the ideal woman should possess and (iii) the changing roles of women.

4.1.1 What is a girl?

In the first group discussion with both group one and group two the participants are asked to define what a girl is, they have to imagine a situation in which they try to describe a girl to someone who has never seen or experienced a girl before, like someone from another planet. This question comes from Frosh et al's interview schedule (Frosh et al.; 2002:275). What they hoped to establish from asking this question was the defining characteristics of a girl in relation to a boy. This question is presented to the participants as an initial icebreaker as the participants are uncertain what to expect and it was a fun

discussion to introduce them to the theme of the focus group. By asking this unobtrusive yet important question, unbeknown to them, they are subconsciously reflecting how they see themselves and other girls. According to Westheimer and Lopater (2002:26) “gender identity refers to our self-awareness of our maleness or femaleness and develops gradually in a social and familial context”.

What is found is that the participants define ‘what a girl is’ and themselves according to four different and sometimes overlapping categories which include physical, biological, mental and emotional dimensions. The physical characteristics of a girl, defined by the participants in group one and two, include her actual physique, her bone structure which is usually smaller than what a boy’s is and her body which is usually a lot curvier as girls have hips, larger thighs and breasts. She is defined as having pretty external features, a sweet voice, longer hair, clean cut, well-presented, neat, and feminine and usually smelling pleasant. Linked to this category are the biological characteristics that distinguish a girl from a boy. A girl has a vagina, a womb and ovaries so she has menstrual cycles/periods which are controlled by the hormones oestrogen and progesterone and she can fall pregnant and give birth to a baby. The mental and emotional characteristics used by the participants to define a girl overlap. The participants feel that the emotional characteristics epitomise ‘what a girl is’. Girls are sensitive, fussy, loving, generous, kind-hearted, gentle, soft, caring, short-tempered and not easy to please, imaginative, romantic, vulnerable to rape, gullible and naïve. They continue by saying that girls are more understanding, more expressive and in touch with their inner feelings; they are psychologically involved in every day activities taking time to think about them, for example, their dress. They pay more attention to detail, and they are mentally as opposed to physically strong and have more things to worry about. They are self-conscious and are concerned about their physical appearances. They experience negative feelings such as irritability and anger. They have the power to manipulate the opposite sex in the way they dress and behave.

4.1.2 Poem ‘Fifteen’

It was thought that the participants could relate to the following poem and that it would be ideal to include in the focus group discussions as most of them were 15 years and older.

*When I was five I always thought
ten more years and I'll be
fifteen.
The perfect age when you
go out with boys,
The perfect age when you
can stay out till twelve or even one,
The perfect age when you
have lots of books to carry home from
school,
The perfect age when you
can kiss – properly –
and even swear!
It seemed all a dream and adventure.
But now that I'm fifteen I wish I were
five again.
The innocent age when you're
not heartbroken and confused over boys,
The innocent age when you
don't get pimples and spots,
The innocent age when you
don't have so much work to do,
The innocent age when you
aren't teased about the way you kiss.
But, I wonder, being twenty-one must be...*

Miranda Rajah (Date unknown)

In relation to the poem, the participants in both groups are asked the following questions; thinking about the feelings of the speaker in the poem, (a) how do you think the girl felt about becoming fifteen when she was five years old? (b) How did you feel about becoming fifteen when you were five years old? (c) What were your hopes and expectations? (d) Describe the girl's feelings now that she is fifteen. (e) Describe your own feelings now that you are fifteen and older. (f) Have your hopes and expectations been fulfilled? (g) Do you think this girl has become wiser as she has grown older? (h) Do you think that you have become wiser as you have grown older? (i) Have you changed much in the last two or three years? (j) If so, how do you think you have changed in the last few years?

On the whole the participants relate to the girl in the poem as they too thought that by being fifteen they would be all grown up and could wear make-up, shave their legs and go out to parties till late and start dating boys. However, they had now realized, like the girl in the poem, that being fifteen (some sixteen) also has its problems. Most of the

participants thought that it would be the ideal age and only saw the good things that they would be able to attain. They do not quite realise that by growing up that one has to take on more responsibility and be more accountable. They have to face puberty and learn to accept and deal with bodily changes. They have to, for example, wear bras and cope with monthly menstrual cycles. None of the participants wish to be five again but they do acknowledge that at that age everything was just fun and games; they had nothing to worry about but now, with the high rates of crime and violence, especially in South Africa, girls are vulnerable to rape and thus have to be very careful when they go out at night.

The participants are also prone to peer pressure as they try to fit in with the rest of their age group as well as wanting to impress their friends - especially boys. They want to experiment with dating and kissing boys as well as with alcohol, smoking and drugs. Furthermore, the participants have to worry about HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. The participants also mention that they are more stressed now because they worry about getting good marks in school in order to apply for university. They also think about what they are going to do after school as they have many options. The participants also mention that with the onset of puberty they have become more sensitive as well as self-conscious about their physical appearances, particularly with the condition of their skin and their weight. According to Johnson et al. (1999:377) "although adolescence represents an often difficult period in a young woman's life, for many teens, this is also a time of exploration, freedom to try new things, and self-awareness".

4.1.3 The likes and dislikes of being a girl

In Frosh et al's. (2002) study one area of research on both the boys and the girls can be seen as a window into the images that each has of the lives and characteristics of the other. This relates to a question included in both of Sharpe's (quoted in Frosh et al., 2002) studies of girls in the 1970's and the 1990's. The girls were asked whether, if they could have chosen for themselves, they would have preferred to have been born a boy or a girl. Their expressed preferences partly reflect the position of women at each time. This movement to endorse being a girl matches the movement towards women's equality, and a strong sense of girls' increasing levels of self-confidence and desire for independence (2002:115). What many of the girls endorse about being female is their ability to have

children, which they see as a lack in men's lives. Although some don't like having periods, and don't relish the pain of childbirth, many think it is worth it for the sake of being a mother. Girls also see other advantages in being a girl, such as being able to do things boys do, being able to wear boys' clothes, and generally be themselves, and not having to worry so much about being judged and criticised by their peers. Those who emphasise the disadvantages of being a girl quote sexual harassment and rape, getting pregnant and giving birth, having periods, and being subject to name-calling (reputation). In the present study the participants are asked what they like about being a girl and what they dislike about being a girl. The participants say that it is easier being a girl although some of the participants did mention that they don't know what it would be like to be a boy so they don't have too much to complain about. What the participants like about being girls is that girls are more open about everything than boys are and that they are closer to their friends and can talk about anything, for example, how their bodies look. They can compliment each other whereas if boys compliment each other people will wonder if they have a tendency to be gay. They like being different, being able to change their hairstyles and their fashion/clothing and wear make-up to make them look prettier:

Lana: Girls can get dressed up for small little occasions and stuff.

Britney: You can be all nice and neat and paint your nails and it's nice to be feminine.

The participants also like the fact that they are appealing and mysterious to the opposite sex and being able to be manipulative and seductive:

Belle: You can get like whatever you want.

Britney: Girls have so much power over guys.

Belle: Ja, they can just do anything like ok 'go fetch me something now!' you can just give them a little smile and they'll go.

The participants also like the fact that they are sometimes treated like ladies and that some men treat them with courtesy:

Belle: Like ladies first.

Britney: They've got manners like in our favour.

What the participants dislike about being girls is the fact that boys don't have to worry about what they look like and what they wear. They are also not as protected or restrained like girls are when they want to go out to social occasions. The participants don't like the fact that they are always worried about their weight and getting cellulite, the way they look, what they wear and this is what causes most of the participants to become so self-conscious:

Lana: It takes so long for girls to lose weight and guys always like think it's so easy for a girl to look their best and you know girls try to look nice for guys and sometimes they never appreciate it. They don't understand that it's so difficult for a girl to be perfect.

Britney: They've got so many high standards for a girl. We have to try and weigh up to other people's standards.

Belle: They want girls with perfect hair, perfect skin, perfect figure, and perfect body.

Although most of the participants' like to feel good about themselves and look and smell good, sometimes they don't like the fact that they feel that they have to always look pretty, neat and presentable. They also want to have days where they can be a bit tomboyish. The participants also don't really like the fact that they have menstruation cycles but they have come to accept it, as it is important in order to have children in the future:

Britney: We have to go through pregnancy and childbirth.

Lana: I know giving birth is beautiful but it's sore; I know I haven't experienced it but I hear it's painful.

They also don't like the fact that girls get called unpleasant names and often get bad reputations for behaviour that is acceptable for boys:

Britney: Girls get bad names much easier than guys, they are branded like forever.

Furthermore the participants dislike that they are vulnerable to rape:

Britney: Girls are scared that they might get raped.

Lana: Some girls are scared of getting attacked or something.

Britney: I have the fear of being like weak, physically, you know. Cause then I won't be able to fight back, you know.

The participants are also vulnerable to sexism, sexual harassment and chauvinism:

Chloe: Some men still feel that they can treat us differently in the workplace.

4.1.4 What do girls get anxious about?

According to Beal (1994) who conducted a study with both boys and girls in order to determine whether or not boys and girls worry about the same or different things, girls between the ages of 12 and 14 “worry more about what others will think of them, are more concerned about being popular with friends of both sexes, worry more that their friends do not really like them, and try to figure out what their friends want from them” (1994:250). The participants in the present study are also worried about similar things that the girls in Beal’s study are worried about and they are asked to discuss what they think girls, nowadays, get most anxious about. Most of the participants indicate that what girls get most anxious about are their physical appearance and the way they look. They are self-conscious about their weight and they worry about what people think of them. According to Beal (1994:243) “teens spend much time imagining what others are thinking of them and feeling self-conscious, especially about the changes in their bodies”. One way to cope with extreme self-consciousness is to try to blend in by doing what everyone else is doing. This is substantiated by Meares (1974:141):

A woman discloses something of herself in her attitude to fashion. It is easy to say that the great fashion houses dictate woman’s fashions, quite so. But a woman discloses a great deal of her inner psychological make-up by the way she reacts to the prevailing trend of fashion. She may go along with it and uses what elements she can to express her femininity or other aspects of her personality. She thus uses fashion to make herself more attractive to men. But she can also use it as a kind of social ‘one-upmanship’ with her woman friends and acquaintances. In addition to this she conforms to fashion as a measure to relieve anxiety. If she is in the

fashion, she is more secure and less anxious. The woman who denies fashion, who goes her own way, is also indirectly expressing something i.e. rebellious.

Some of the participants further substantiate this claim with responses such as the following:

Chloe: You also want to be with fashion.

Jewls: But you don't like it; if fashion comes out and you really don't like it, you go with it and hope it ends soon.

Sky: If you go out looking like the trend with the latest stuff on then you automatically look cool.

Jewls: And you are automatically relaxed.

This is why teenagers so often dress the way their friends do. At the mall you can often see groups of young adolescents wearing similar types or styles of clothing and particular brand-names. Similarly the participants indicate that by dressing in the same way as other young people i.e. in the same style or according to popular trends, they are temporarily relieved of being self-conscious and being aware of others looking at them.

4.1.5 How important is a girl's physical appearance?

Seeing as the participants continuously mention how they are so much more self-conscious about themselves and their physical appearance and how they get anxious about their physical appearance, they are asked how important physical appearance is and what aspects of it are important to them.

The participants respond that physical appearance is everything; it is of the utmost importance and is prioritised in society today. These are some of their responses:

Lana: I think it's very important.

Britney: Everyone says personality is the first thing but I mean, you not going to look twice at someone that you don't find attractive so you won't get to know them anyway. So physical appearance is very important.

Belle: On the first impression especially it's like really important.

Britney: The whole package, the way you are.

Lana: Physical appearance; the way you look, the way you dress, and the way you take care of yourself is very important, especially for girls.

Britney: Girls get judged more on their physical appearance.

The participants also indicate that numerous magazines are influential in portraying what the standards of physical attractiveness are, for example:

Chloe: Girls get anxious about their looks; they want to be just as pretty as the pretty people you see in the magazines.

Sky: You look in the magazines and you see all these people eating like healthy food and they've all got slim figures so then you think now I've got to go and eat that food to be thin.

The magazines that the participants read, for example, SL, Cosmopolitan, Zest, Fairlady, Wicked, Salt Water and Elle, have articles each month related to health, exercise and general well being. The gym in Rustenburg is very popular, and has special rates for students. As a result most of the participants attend the gym on a regular basis.

4.1.6 What does society value in women?

The participants are asked (a) what they think society values in women, (b) what society's image of the ideal woman is, (c) what does the ideal woman look like and what would make her perfect. These questions are included because of their importance as girls are influenced and shaped by society through various socialization agents such as the family and the media.

What they envision society's ideal women to be like is:

Jewls: Very smart, sophisticated and strong.

Sky: Kind and a good listener.

Chloe: Intelligent and objective.

Tori: Not judgmental.

Lana: Well groomed.

Belle: She has balance in her life.

Britney: She's got time for her work but she also has time for her family and kids.

The strong influence of society and the media on young adolescent girls is clearly reflected in the participants' responses. What comes to the fore in the focus group discussions is that the participants feel that what society values in women is independence, uniqueness, mental strength, emotional stability, somebody one can talk to, motherly figures, friends and someone who is approachable.

In a study conducted by Steiner Adair (quoted in Gilligan, 1990) who interviewed thirty white girls, aged 14 to 18 years attending Emma Willard School in 1981 and 1982, two distinct patterns of responses emerged in the girls' answers to questions concerning perceptions of societal values toward women, cultural ideal images of women, and individual ideal images of women. Steiner Adair refers to these two patterns as the 'Wise Woman' and the 'Super Woman'.

In relation to the present study, the majority of the participants respond with a superwoman response pattern, identifying the independent and autonomous superwoman as the societal as well as their own ideal. According to both groups, society values women that are independent, career orientated and capable of fulfilling their roles as mothers. It values women that can succeed in being good mothers, wives and home-keepers as well as being career women. Most of the participants want to be career women as well as good wives, mothers and home-keepers and none of the girls aspire to only staying at home and taking care of their future families.

4.1.7 The ideal man and the ideal woman

The ideal woman portrayed by Smith (1998:75) is a "female with moulded plastic breasts, tiny waist and pert bottom" (The Barbie image). According to Beal (1994:243) expectations of the other gender are highly stereotyped in early adolescence. In her particular research when she asked the participants to describe the ideal man, the teenage girls responded that "he would be kind, honest, fun-loving and smiling, and would bring flowers" - an image that the researcher termed the 'chivalrous football player'. Teenage boys described the ideal woman as the "smiling sunbather, meaning a female who was

good looking, sexy, and spent her time in leisure activities such as tanning rather than working or studying”.

In the present study these two questions are included to determine the participants' perceptions and descriptions of what the 'perfect girl' and 'perfect boy' are, to explore where these perceptions are derived from and if society plays a role in influencing and affecting how young people perceive these ideals. In this way, the same-sex and opposite-sex attractiveness conceptions are obtained from the participants.

The participants say that the perfect girl presents herself well, is a strong person, has time for her family as well as her work, is kind-hearted and generous, can defend herself and is independent. She is also beautiful, intelligent, bubbly, and confident and believes in being feminine as well as being a feminist. She is not self-centred and also has a sense of fun and is able to be serious in serious situations.

Some participants liken the 'perfect girl' to Britney Spears (musician/actress) because according to them:

Britney: She's successful, she achieved her dream, she's a strong person and has time for both her family and her work and she is also kind hearted and very generous.

Belle: She has a foundation for kids who want to be famous.

Others liken the 'perfect girl' to Angelina Jolie (model/actress):

Britney: I also like Angelina Jolie; she can't have kids but she's adopted a Cambodian baby.

Lana: She's a strong woman as well.

Both of these women are celebrities and feature in the media. They are in all sorts of magazines, on television and in movies and this is an example of how influential the media has been.

When asked to give their interpretation of the 'perfect boy' most of the participants describe him as good looking, gorgeous, masculine, social, popular, intelligent, fun, outgoing, adventurous, interesting, sensitive, macho, and as having a great personality

and a sense of humour. He is in touch with his feminine side and he is also romantic, for example:

Jewls: Run our baths, wake us up with flowers and breakfast, and take us shopping without moaning.

Lana: Do something special once in a while like maybe sprinkle rose petals on your bed. He must respect you and your body.

Britney: And he must do small things like let you walk through the door first, pull your chair out (a gentleman). He needs to be compromising and understanding.

According to Frosh et al. (2002) there have been some changes in the portrayal of men and masculinity over the last few decades, including an added softening of image, which has been absorbed and reflected in the media. Images of men in film, television and advertising roles depict sensitive types holding babies, or expressing emotions other than anger, or engaged in other so-called 'unmacho' activities. Nowadays, men are seen as being more tender and caring than their predecessors, and fatherhood is important. There was overwhelming support from the boys in their survey for a statement that 'it is as important for men to be sensitive and caring as it is to be strong and tough' and many agreed strongly with this (2002:114). The girls participating in the present study indicated a similar view because their ideal is someone who is sensitive but macho at the same time. Gray (2002) further supports and substantiates Frosh et al. (2002) in that he says that "many men have denied some of their masculine attributes in order to become more loving and nurturing. Likewise many women have denied some of their feminine attributes in order to earn a living in a workforce that rewards masculine attributes" (2002:8). Thus the participants' images of the perfect girl and perfect boy confirm Bohan's (1993) argument that gender is an agreement that resides in social interchange; it is precisely what we agree it to be.

The aim of Carlson Jones's (2001) study is to identify the features that define ideal attractiveness for adolescents. The results indicate that both same-sex peers and models/celebrities are the targets of social comparisons for physical attributes, but comparisons on personal and social attributes are more likely directed toward same-sex peers. Similarly the participants in the present study also discuss multiple attributes to define attractiveness but instead of peers being the more frequent targets of social

comparison, models and celebrities are. Although the participants may on occasion compare themselves with other peers this was not discussed within the focus group discussion.

4.1.8 The changing roles of women

Many women still maintain the dominant traditional roles i.e. caretaker, mother, wife and homemaker. These roles were enforced by the patriarchal society and are continuously reinforced by these women onto their children, mainly their daughters. These daughters in turn re-enforce these roles on to their daughters. Thus over many generations women's roles have remained uncontested and have succeeded in socializing women to accept the subordinate, inferior, second class citizen's role. Nowadays, due to the feminist movement, women have been given the opportunity to revoke being suppressed and have been given rights in order to attain things once denied to them. Today's women are often unaware of the accomplishments of the women's liberation movements that led to the freedom of women that we have today. Women no longer have to be the homemaker if they so choose; they can opt to be career women instead. Many women have furthered their education and entered the working world. Due to changes in society like divorce and 'standard of living' expenses, dual-income earning families have become the norm.

The participants in the present study are asked various questions to determine whether or not they supported/condoned traditional roles that are assigned to women or if they are more liberal and adopting modern roles. They are asked how they perceive the roles of women twenty years ago and if their perceptions of their own roles have changed. The participants are capable of answering this question because in their Grade 10 History syllabus they touch on the emancipation of women through the ages, for example, how they got the vote, Emily Pankhurst and other groups that fought for women's rights. They can also call upon their memories of their great grandmothers, grandmothers and their mothers and what their social function was when compared with what it is today. They are also asked what their roles are and what roles they aspire to have in the future.

In Oliver Schreiner's (1971:188) book, (which is also a set school book) "Story of an African farm", Lyndall, a character in the book, says about women:

We are cursed, born cursed from the time our mothers bring us into the world till the shrouds are put on us. It is not what is done to us, but what is made of us that

wrongs us. We all enter the world little plastic beings, with so much natural force, perhaps, but for the rest –blank; and the world tells us what we are to be, and shapes us by the ends it sets before us. To you it says –Work! And to us it says – Seem!

In the past career opportunities for women were limited. They were secretaries, teachers or nurses and if they entered that field they would stay in that field until they resigned or retired. “When we ask to be doctors, lawyers, law-makers, anything but ill-paid drudges, they say, - No” (Schreiner, 1971:190). Nowadays there is an abundance of choices but in order to get a good job that pays well a woman is required to have a matric certification and further her education at a college, technikon or university to give herself the best opportunity and to get a good job.

The participants discuss what women’s roles were twenty years ago and most speak in the past tense as if those roles are no longer the sole roles available to a woman; some women have broken away from conforming to what society expects of women and managed to combine new modern roles to the existing traditional roles.

These are examples of some of the participant’s responses in relation to the traditional roles of women:

Britney: They looked after babies, cooked, cleaned, did household chores and made sure that supper was on the table before the man got home.

Chloe: They were housewives.

Britney: Women weren’t allowed to vote.

Belle: There weren’t like so many jobs for them you know for them like in high positions, like in government and stuff.

Lana: They were looked down on. They weren’t respected. They didn’t have rights.

The participants’ responses emphasize the domestic role of women, i.e. being a good housekeeper, mother and wife.

When asked what women’s roles are today the participants mention the following:

Jewls: Most women work today.

Belle: Women are becoming the breadwinners you know.

Tori: In some families it's the women that are the providers.

Chloe: Some women are still looking after children.

Britney: Any role that a man has a woman has also.

Lana: I mean some women now take the role of the man, wear the pants in the house.

Belle: And then the dads stay at home and take care of the kids.

Lana: It's like the roles are being reversed.

Dawn: Women of today are generally not interested in settling down too soon and getting married and starting a family. Women of today tend to be more career-orientated. I think women today are more focused on getting a job and being independent and you do get those women that just want to get married and have children and, you know, have a family. But I feel that today it's going more towards where the woman has a job, the husband has a job and the kids are at day cares.

Lana: Now women even have their own successful businesses.

In comparison to the participants' responses on the traditional roles of women, their responses above reflect the emancipation of women over the last decade. On the one hand some of the participants emphasize that women not only have to be good housekeepers, mothers and wives, they also have the choice of being career women. Women are also able to choose whether or not to combine both traditional and modern roles. However, women's roles in some of the black cultures haven't really changed. For example:

Elizabeth: The women have to do a lot of work and the men just sit under the trees drinking beer, beer that we call mbamba, they drink it sitting under the trees and women have to do cooking, washing and all those things. The grandmothers tell them that the young ones must help them. That is our culture and that is what we should do.

Johnson et al. (1999:40) substantiate this by arguing that:

The socialization practices used by different racial, ethnic, and socio-economic groups influence how girls understand and deal with pressures to conform to idealized standards of femininity. Young black girls are socialized to expect that they will have to support themselves and, perhaps, a family.

In her research, Beal (1994) shows that boys and girls are given different tasks as soon as they are capable of independent and productive work. Girls usually take over domestic chores, such as watching younger siblings, cleaning, sweeping, and preparing food. Similar distinctions are made in children's chores in the United States and Britain. Girls help with 'indoor' housework, such as doing dishes, vacuuming, and making beds, while boys do 'outside' chores, such as taking the garbage out, mowing the lawn, and washing the car. Kimmel (2000:128) refers to these chores as being allocated in - his and her - 'zones'. His zone is outdoors and her zone is indoors. The chores assigned to boys and girls reflect their future roles as adults, in which women will be responsible for the home and men will work outside the home.

When the participants are asked what their roles are most of them mention duties and tasks that are similar to what Beal (1994) classifies as "boys' and girls' work":

Tori: As the oldest child and daughter of the house I am expected to be mature and responsible. I often have to look after my brother, who is eight years old, when my parents go out.

Sky: My roles are pretty basic; I am the one and only daughter which tells you already that I am the 'house-girl'. I enjoy cooking so I make dinner every night and I go shopping with my mom.

Chloe: Even though I am not the oldest I am still expected to do the most or at least more than my brother. Maybe my parents think I will do it better because I am a girl.

Belle: Personally I feel that I have more roles than I can cope with, at present. It is almost as if I am an actress, who has several roles to play in a day. The most important is being a well-behaved, hard-working student, then a dedicated athlete, a caring, supportive sister, an obedient daughter and a loyal, trustworthy friend. At home the housework is equally shared between my parents, my brother and myself, so the females are not the only ones who cook and clean in our household.

Britney: I have many roles; I am a daughter, a sister, a friend, a mediator, a cousin and a girlfriend, which I feel is my most important role.

Most of the girls still perform the traditional roles of cooking and cleaning, making their own beds and cleaning their own rooms, feeding their pets, making coffee, washing dishes, hanging up the washing as well as being loving, caring, reliable and trustworthy. This confirms Connell's (2002) research on gender roles. People have come to believe that women and men should occupy and perform certain roles as expected by the norms of society. The division of labour and the assigning of tasks within the family for instance is one way in which children are groomed or prepared for their roles in society. Thus gender roles are created, passed on and learned within the multifaceted interactions between individuals in a household and family. Gender roles and preferences are also reinforced by language and images throughout our lives; this means they are persistently confirmed, maintained and strengthened.

4.1.9 Home executives versus career women

In her research, Beal (1994:80) posed the following question: "What are the effects of having an employed mother on children's gender role development?" She found that seeing mom go to work, earning wages, and having responsibilities outside the home clearly expands a girl's own ideas about what the future holds and makes her less stereotyped. Across ethnic groups, daughters of employed mothers are more likely to consider work to be an important part of their future identities as adults and to be interested in more prestigious occupations.

In the present study only a few of the participant's mother's work outside the home yet all the participants aspire to be career women as opposed to home executives (housewives). This shows that the participants are not only influenced by their mothers but also through the various agents of socialization such as the media. The participants are asked what they think about women who stay at home and do not do paid work. Some of their responses are as follows:

Tori: It depends on the type of person you are, some people want to, some people are ambitious and want to try new things; some people just want to stay at home.

Britney: Some women just love to do it; they love being with their babies; they love cooking because that's what makes them feel womanly, feminine. Ja, if you compare what they do at home to any job it's actually more.

Lana: They just don't get paid for what they do.

Although the participants all aspire to be career women as opposed to home executives they view unpaid domestic work as work. This work entails household tasks/chores, reproduction and raising the future workforce. However, more admiration and respect, in general, appears to be given to women who are career orientated.

When asked what they think about career women the participants appear to have a lot of admiration and respect for those women who have chosen to be career orientated:

Jewls: I have a lot of respect for them cause it's taken a lot to get them there and it's taken a lot of studying.

Tori: Ja, it takes courage, perseverance.

Tori and Jewls: Motivation.

Jewls: You have a lot of respect for yourself if you know you've worked hard.

The advantages of being career women, according to these participants, are that such women are independent and don't have to rely on anyone; they are self-sufficient and are able to financially support themselves:

Jewls: I would worry if I had to rely on the man for money. At least if you're a career woman, then at least you have your own salary.

Dawn: In my family my aunt doesn't have a job so she's expected to obviously be the housewife and she probably doesn't mind. But when she wants to do shopping or whatever she has to ask for the money and, you know, sometimes I don't believe that's right. I feel that you should be independent; you should have your own money and not have to ask for it and stuff like that. I think they don't want to have to rely on anyone, because that's the one thing I hate is having to rely on anyone because most of the time you get let down. I feel you can't trust anyone in this world of today so to speak and ja, I think they want to be their own individual and be able to show everyone that they can, you know, have their own life and live and support themselves.

Furthermore there is more security for career women in the sense that if they choose not to get married they will be capable of living on their own. If they choose to get married and there is the possibility of a divorce or separation, they will not be dependent on their partner or anyone else and will have the experience and qualifications to get employment. One consequence of becoming career women nowadays, according to these participants, is that women often tend to postpone having children or they choose not to have any children at all.

Lana: Nowadays, I mean like girls are wanting to have babies like maybe they will get married when they like thirty, they first maybe do, go study, where as thirty years ago, you know, girls got married at the age of sixteen and started having kids at seventeen and things like that. Now it's like things are delayed.

Women who do not postpone having children and continue to work, require that their children be looked after by other family members or day care centres.

One possible solution to this problem would be to:

Jewls: Run your own business from home so that you can still be with your kids.

4.1.10 Photo exercise

In Frosh et al. (2002:276-277) study the interviewee/s are asked to select from twenty different large photographs of boys and/or men in various situations (a) two which show someone who is most like them, (b) two which show someone who is least like them, and (c) two, which show someone they would most like to be like. They are asked to give reasons for their choices.

A similar photo exercise is used in the present study. It was a home task that participants completed individually and in their own time, prior to the first focus group discussion. The participants could choose any photographs of girls and/or women, from any form of media (magazines, newspapers, internet print outs) or even photographs and they also had to give reasons for their choices. It hoped that this task would encourage the participants to look deeper within themselves and become aware of themselves and who they are and what they represent as being girls. This question also indicates what figures these

participants identify with. It also describes the kind of girl that they are as well as the type of women that they want to be.

Some of the participants found this task interesting and enjoyable while others found it quite difficult because it's not something that you do or think about everyday. However, this task gave them an opportunity to become more aware of themselves:

Britney: You don't actually think about this stuff until you have to.

Lana: And then you sit and you wonder, who can I compare myself to, you know.

Britney: It actually motivates you to think that you could be like them and nothing's stopping you, it's just your own ambition.

A majority of the participants in both focus groups would most like to be like celebrities. One aspires to be like her mother and another girl aspires to be Emily Pankhurst. It's difficult to reason why most of the participants all aspire to be celebrities but it could indicate, besides the tremendous influence of the media, their unrealistic understanding of stars and people in the public light. Public figures include Prince William and deceased Princess Diana, Tori Amos, Charlize Theron, Hilary Duff, Britney Spears, Halle Berry, Poseletso (from Idols) and Oprah Winfrey. They appear to be attractive, popular and wealthy, to be busy, attending formal parties or functions and look like they are in fun places. They also appear to attract people to them. They receive attention and everyone seems to love and adore them. They are spoken and read about, their pictures can be found in pencil cases and their posters appear on most teenagers' bedroom walls.

The participants do not realize that in order for celebrities to become famous they are required to put in a lot of time, hard work and effort. The participants see the end product and what the media wants them to see, particularly the glitz and the glamour of Hollywood. The participants who aspire to become like Prince William and like Princess Diana was, are aspiring to be the highest that one can achieve, to be the royal king or queen.

On the other hand Emmeline Pankhurst who is known for protesting for women's rights in Britain in 1928 is famous or infamous depending on which sex you are. She has become recognized for the impact she had on the women's movement. For someone to aspire to be like her, they aspire to have the power that she had, her drive and

commitment to change the way women perceive themselves and men's idea's of what a woman should be.

A girl who aspires to be like her mother wants to maintain that sense of peace and security that her mother has given her. She is content with life and is satisfied. Perhaps her family has offered her enough and she comes from a well established home and she does not have the need for or aspire to be a celebrity with a glamorise lifestyle. The fact that her mother is also liked by other people and admired for who she is i.e. friendly, outgoing, charming, trustworthy and pretty, probably appeals to her and she also wants to be liked by others in the way that her mother is.

4.1.11 Independence

According to Gilligan et al. (1990) who conducted a study with young adolescent girls attending Emma Willard School, the girls were asked questions related to independence. What they found is that developing independence is seen as improving the capacity to meet one's own needs, so that others can be appreciated as people rather than as instrumental providers. In reducing the preoccupation with receiving care these women report a heightened capacity to look outside themselves and attend to others. At the same time, relationships provide the support that is needed to push one's own development further.

In the present study the participants repeatedly refer to the concept 'independence'. It appears that while independence is of importance to these participants, it is unclear exactly what this concept means to them. The participants are asked (a) why they value independence (b) what purpose it serves and (c) what motivates its pursuit.

Their responses are:

Tori: We also want to change things and make a difference.

Chloe: And also we want to be independent because so many marriages don't work out.

Britney: To be able to rely on yourself, you've got your own money.

Lana: You know that you did it yourself; you made it on your own and you don't have to rely on someone else.

The participants value independence because it enables them to be self-reliant regardless of whether or not they are single, married, and/or divorced. They prefer not to be dependent on anyone else.

In conjunction with the question of 'independence' the participants are also asked what they think of feminists and what the concept 'feminism' means to them. I include this question because the feminist movement initiated the emancipation of women and I want to determine whether or not the participants support/condone traditional roles or if they are more liberal and adopting modern roles.

The participants' responses include as follows:

Tori: A feminist is a strong woman who believes that women can do anything, a belief that a woman can do anything that a man can.

Lana: Feminism is like someone who takes care of themselves, is not shy to show that they're a girl or a woman.

All the participants express their support for feminists and they share the same beliefs, i.e. that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men.

The second focus group discussions explore both the participants' perspectives on gender relations as well as their views on and expectations of the future as women. The following discussions are presented below.

4.2 GENDER RELATIONS

Firstly, in the second focus group discussions, the participants' socializing with other adolescents, older and younger than themselves, is explored. Secondly, gender relationships and the interactions of the participants with boys and girls are investigated.

According to Frosh et al. (2002) their research suggested that there are different kinds of masculinities available to boys and men. They found that through various forms of literature on masculinity there is a 'dominant' form of masculinity that influences boys' and men's understanding of how they have to act in order to be 'acceptably' male, and that this dominant mode is associated with heterosexuality, toughness, power and authority, competitiveness and the subordination of gay men. They referred to this as 'hegemonic' masculinity (2002:75). They asked the boys participating in their study

about masculinities in both general and specific terms. Examples of relevant questions asked were: 'I wonder if you could tell me how you get on with other boys, for instance at school or with friends you see outside?' and 'Are some boys popular? How do they get to be popular?' (2002:76).

In the second focus group discussions some of the questions presented in Frosh et al's interview schedule were adapted for the present study. These questions included (a) How do you get on with older and younger girls in your school? (b) Are some girls popular at school? (c) What makes them popular? The following two questions were added to the sequence in order to determine the degree of difference between being popular and unpopular: 'Are some girls unpopular at school? and what makes them unpopular? Answers to these questions could help to gain a better understanding of their perceptions in both general and specific terms.

4.2.1 Relationships with younger girls

When the participants are asked how they get on with younger girls most of them respond that the younger girls are immature and irritating:

Sky: They're irritating and they're very immature compared to what we are.

The participants mention that they don't really have anything in common with the younger girls and thus find it difficult to talk to them:

Chloe: Their conversation topics are very different to ours so we find them a bit difficult to talk to.

The participants do acknowledge though that they were probably the same when they were younger.

On the other hand the participants also enjoy the fact that the younger girls look up to them and admire them. It makes them feel that they are maturing and they also feel proud because the younger girls ask for their advice:

Lana: You feel proud because they are learning from you.

The participants also find it quite amusing and enjoyable that the younger girls are so curious and naïve in certain aspects, for example:

Jewls: They're curious. I mean they will say to you 'what have you done, what have you taken, how far have you got?'

Sky: Or you are speaking about guys and you like 'Ja, I kissed him this weekend' and they're like 'ah oh my gosh!'

Jewls: 'You guys kissed, oh my word!'

Tori: Ja, we weren't like, we didn't talk about the things that we talk about now; we didn't act the way we act now.

4.2.2 Relationships with older girls

When the participants are asked how they get on with older girls they reply:

Chloe: I enjoy being around older girls.

Sky: I get along with older girls much better than I do with younger girls; you have a lot of respect for them.

Chloe: And you can find out new things.

Jewls: You can learn a lot from them.

Chloe: They can help you.

Jewls: They can give you advice and stuff.

Sky: And if you have problems you find it easier to talk to them, they've kind of been through those problems.

The participants enjoy being around older girls because it makes them feel that they are more mature. They can also go to them for advice and learn from their experiences. They are also just as curious as the younger girls in the sense that they also want to know what the older girls get up to and what bars and clubs they go to. On the downside they are brought back to reality and their real age when they aren't old enough to attend over eighteen nightclubs and bars and this makes them feel inferior.

They are also concerned about what the older girls think about them, for example:

Chloe: I wonder if they feel that we're a bit of an inconvenience for them when we are with them and talking to them. It just makes you wonder if they feel the same way we feel about other younger girls. Probably sometimes they do; they want a break from younger people and they also want to talk to older people sometimes.

There seems to be a mutual understanding between young girls and older girls to respect one another:

Britney: You also have to respect older girls much more and the young ones have to respect you.

In the first focus group the poem 'Fifteen' was used as a short exercise to get the participants thinking about how they were before they turned fifteen and what their expectations were and which of those expectations were met when they turned fifteen. Was it like what they had dreamt it would be? The participants imply during the discussion that the younger girls seem to aspire to be older, like the girl in the poem and like themselves. The easiest and most accessible way for these younger girls to access the older girls' world which they haven't reached/entered into yet, is by associating and participating in discussions with those girls. This world seems ideal and by befriending the older girls they appear to feel more mature and older. On the other hand the older girls seem to have forgotten going through that stage, the age of innocence, minor responsibilities and certain restrictions and perhaps some of their expectations were not met when they turned fifteen. Like the girl in the poem they aspire to be in another world - that of a twenty-one year old or older. There seems to be certain ranking divisions or age group stratifications because once you've entered a particular age group you can only aspire to be in the next age group. You can't go backwards. Those younger than you have to respect you and rely on you for advice and learn from your experiences and in turn you have to respect those who are older than you.

4.2.3 Different types of girls

The participants are asked whether or not there are different types of girls and if so, what types of girls exist. The participants discuss different types of girls and list each under three specific categories i.e. the normal/mainstream girls, the unpopular girls and the popular girls.

4.2.3.1 The normal/mainstream girls

When a girl is classified as being normal or mainstream she is 'ordinary' or 'mediocre'. She can be quiet and shy:

Jewls: You get the shy girls. You get two types of shy people, you get the shy people that don't say anything and then you get the other shy people that are really like sluts.

A mainstream girl is also referred to as someone who is just not noticed or sociable and is a private person that keeps to herself. This type of girl is neither popular nor unpopular.

4.2.3.2 The unpopular girls

When a girl is classified as being unpopular she is someone that is an academic achiever, a girl who works hard and is a perfectionist and is sometimes referred to as being a nerd or a bof. Unpopular girls are:

Tori: Girls who are super intelligent.

Chloe: The people that take their school career seriously.

Jewls: A bof.

Sky: The ones that sit in the library and read.

Some girls are unpopular if they don't accept themselves for who they really are and fake or pretend to be someone that they aren't:

Sky: You get those chicks that like always want to make themselves be like someone else, like fake their personality type of thing to be someone that they want to be like but they actually not like.

Girls are also unpopular if they are unkind and unfriendly, and are referred to as being 'bitches'. The shy girl that is referred to as being a slut is also classified as being an unpopular girl. Girls who have a low self-esteem, who are too fat or too thin, who swear a lot are also regarded as being unpopular girls.

4.2.3.3 The popular girls

When a girl is classified as being popular she can be popular in many good ways as well as in bad ways, for example:

Britney: Its funny girls can be popular in a good or a bad way. They can be popular in a bad way because of the way they dress, and popular as in everyone likes you.

When a girl is classified as being popular in good ways she is someone who has a friendly personality; she is kind and nice to everyone around her. She is also very pretty and liked by both girls and boys.

Some of the participants' responses with regards to girls who are popular in good ways are:

Halle: Those girls like in American movies.

Lana: The popular girl is always the pretty girl.

Britney: The cheerleaders.

Lana: The one with the perfect figure.

Britney: Also like very popular girls are like, like in the movies they also like the girls that get all of the guys, all the guys want them. The most desirable is always like the most popular; the same with the guy like the star quarter back or the captain of the rugby team, the jocks or the bad boys.

The girl that is popular in bad ways is someone who is unfriendly and unkind:

Britney: If you are ugly to everyone they all know you're a bitch.

An unpopular girl is known for having a bad reputation is called certain names, for example, a skank or a slut because she is:

Sky: Popular towards the guys because they can get you any day they want.

Lana: You can be popular for being known to like spread your legs or whatever, like the way you dress like maybe if you dress in short skirts and tops and things like that.

There doesn't seem to be a dominant form of 'femininity' that girls are required to attain or live up to; in fact there are numerous and endless types and ways of being a girl. Girls can take on a number of these different ways of being feminine depending on what mood they are in. Outside influences such as the environment, the occasion, the place and the atmosphere can also be influential in the types of femininity they portray. According to the participants being feminine is associated with good manners, good behaviour, speaking and acting appropriately, being polite, kind, sweet and caring, these girls indicate that femininity comprises of all these facets.

4.2.4 Girls' relationships with boys

Frosh et al. (2002) and his colleagues also interviewed 24, 11 – 14 year old girls individually about boys. They were asked (a) whether they thought girls and boys were different or similar (b) whether there were different types of boys; (c) about what it was like to socialize with boys (d) what boyfriends are like and (e) what boys as friends are like. The girls' accounts provided a different perspective on boys and also gave some insight into the resources girls drew upon in constituting their own identities.

The above questions are used in the present study to gain insight into the participants' gender relations with other adolescents.

4.2.5 The differences and similarities between girls and boys

The gender schema, according to Gergen (quoted in Beal; 1994:135), is one of the ways that people understand and perceive women and men. It is a complex structure of information about gender; this information includes traits that supposedly describe women and men. In Connell's (1999) article he expresses that people are already accustomed to thinking that there are deep natural differences between women and men. He indicates that there are two types of bodies, the male body and the female body which are distinct from each other and give rise to two different kinds of people.

When asked the differences and similarities between girls and boys, both groups of participants list these into four categories, that is, the (a) physical, (b) emotional, (c) materials and (d) activities.

(a) Defining Physical Differences

The physical differences and similarities between girls and boys defined by the participants in each group include the different biological traits, different hormones, different maturity levels and similar basic needs such as food and water.

(b) Defining Emotional Differences

The emotional differences and similarities between girls and boys comprise of different persona/personalities, different levels of sensitivity and different moods.

(c) Defining Material Differences

The materials category includes different styles of dress, different hairstyles and different accessories. (Both can have long and short hair, use hair gel, use deodorant, cologne and perfume and wear jewellery).

(d) Defining Differences in Activities

Girls and boys also participate in different and similar activities and partake in similar and different sports; they also mention that their conversation topics with boys and girls differ but that both do enjoy gossiping.

4.2.6 Being with girls versus being with boys

The participants are asked whether it is similar or different being with boys than it is with girls and the majority agree that it is in fact different. The differences between being with boys rather than with girls are that their content of conversations differ:

Chloe: You obviously don't speak about the same things.

This appears to be the only difference, as the participants don't mention any other differences throughout the discussion of this question. When the participants are with the boys they talk about almost everything that is any sort of topic that is related to both boys and girls. Girls can talk to boys about other boys and the boys in turn could talk to girls about other girls. These conversations are normally centred on asking for advice in terms of romance and dating, for example:

Britney: They ask me 'does she like me? And 'what do you think of her?'

Halle: 'Like if you go out with a girl what's the perfect gift to give her or something on your first date?'

Britney: It's nice that you can ask their opinion, for example, 'do you think she's pretty and why?' It's nice to get like their perspective and then you know like what you doing wrong and what you can do to get a guy, ja.

Lana: They are more straightforward with you.

Belle: A guy can find out if another guy likes you or not. He will ask him for you, you know. He will also tell you what that guy likes in a girl.

Boys and girls also talk about other general topics such as television programmes or the latest movies, music and sport:

Belle: We talk about formula one; we talk about 'did you watch the soccer match?' and 'did you watch the rugby?' stuff like that.

Britney: Boys are just fun, I mean it's nice to be with a girl and talk about like girl stuff but then to be with a guy I don't know it's just fun.

Lana: We jerk around more with guys, with some girls it's like I don't know they take things more seriously than guys do.

Britney: And like what you say to a guy he won't judge you, a girl friend will judge you.

The responses below indicate what participants talk about when they are with other girls:

Jewls: Bras and periods.

Sky: What size clothes you wear. What you think about other people; you can talk about your relationship with your boyfriend and with guys you can't really. We discuss guys, what they look like.

Britney: Like the way you kissed the guy, how his body is built.

Lana: The guy's looks, you also wouldn't talk to guys about personal things like periods; they would be like "ewe I don't want to hear that stuff".

Britney: Or like the latest clothes, or a new lip-ice or make-up.

Lana: Ja, the guy would be like that's real boring kind of thing you know. You've got to have a girl friend for the feminine side of things. Your girl friends will always be there to listen to.

Britney: Also like with your girl friends you can gossip. Guys just think it's stupid if girls gossip.

Lana: Girls will gossip in the smallest little details; I mean girls can see like the finest little details in someone.

Chloe: Somehow we always end up talking about food at break. While we eat our lunch we also talk about it for some odd reason.

In Frosh et al's (2002:130-131) research the girls "talked about shopping, dancing, singing, boys, home, sisters, friends, periods and clothes. For boys (according to girls), the topic of conversation was, simply and solely, football". Similarly the participants in the present study mention more or less similar topics that most girls seem to talk about when they are with girls. Friendship, conversation and communication (talk) appears to be very important to the participants' lives. Friendship, conversation and communication in general remain important to most women.

4.2.7 Girls' relationships with boys and girls

The participants were asked the following questions: (a) do you mix more or less with boys than you did in primary school? (b) What's it like having boys as friends? (c) Do you tend to spend most of your time with boys or girls? (d) Do you do the same things with girls as with boys who are friends? and (e) what do you and your friends like doing together?

The participants, participating in the present study, have a balanced relationship with both boys and girls and they like to combine both male and female relationships in their everyday lives. The social activities are more or less similar, that is, both girls and boys like to go to the mall singularly and in groups, and watch movies, play pool, rent videos or DVDs and go to parties. According to Beal (1994), in many communities young adolescents no longer date in the old-style boy-girl couple fashion, rather, groups of boys and girls meet at the mall; go to the movies or party together. The new more casual mixed-gender interactions and activities actually appear to be quite beneficial to girls. They have the chance to interact with boys on a casual basis and to build their confidence about being with the other gender in low-key situations with others around. The participants also mention that they feel a lot safer and protected when guys are with them. The difference with being with boys is that it seems to be more playful. Yet there is the chance of some flirtations, which can lead to some of them being more than just friends.

Britney: In primary school you were just like friends and now all the guys just think about 'ah can I get with her?' Now the guys want to be more than just friends. Oprah said it's impossible for a guy and a girl to be best friends without one developing feelings for the other. It's always one of them that will feel more.

Lana: Your feelings change, especially when you get older; especially if you've known that person since you were like young, for so many years; and then you get older you know and feelings start to develop.

Girls generally don't have to worry about their girl friends becoming interested in them romantically and thus it is easier to have more boy friends in primary school as the girls don't have to worry about the boys wanting to date them. They were comfortable just

being friends. But now that they are older their friendships have had to adjust because they are now inclined to want to be more than just friends.

Generally the participants just seem to talk about themselves and other boys and girls and movies and computer games. On the other hand being with girls appears to be a lot more personal in the sense that they feel more comfortable talking about more personal and intimate things rather than with boys and their parents. Girls also have a range of different things that they can do together, for example, shopping, trying on each other's clothes, just talking about nothing in particular and watching girlie movies.

Sky: We try on each other's clothes and costumes.

Lana: And I mean there's like girlie stuff that we can do with each other, for example, paint nails, have sleepovers, facials and things like that you know.

Close friendships are considered to be the most rewarding and satisfying relationships. Adolescent girls spend more time with their friends and they receive more commitment, moral and emotional support from their best friends than they do from boys. Loyalty and trust are of great importance in girls' friendships as well as in relationships with their peers.

Kimmel (2000) explained that most women, according to surveys, believe that women's friendships are decidedly better than men's because they involve personal concern, intimate sharing, and more emotional exchange, while men's friendships were seen by the same women as more likely to involve work, sports, business, and other impersonal activities. Although these particular beliefs are also mentioned by the participants in the present study, the girls however did not indicate that their friendships with girls are better than their friendships with boys. Both friendships (with boys and girls) appear to be important to them as they complement each other. Both boys and girls have the need to talk to each other about different things. Thus they learn different things from each other and see things from different perspectives, that is, a female or male point of view. This also provides them with the opportunity to access each other's different worlds and gives them insight into what it is like to be a member of the opposite sex. Friendships influence young people's gender and same-gender-peers influence the socialization process.

The second focus group discussion further explores the participants' views on and expectations of the future.

4.3 FUTURE EXPECTATIONS AS WOMEN

The participants' future expectations include firstly completion of school education and future employment. Secondly, it includes interest in future relationships that may include marriage and siblings. Thirdly, it includes the possibility of successfully combining marriage and parenting with a career. This links with the next point, that is, participants' concerns for the future, their fears and expectations and their dreams of where they will be in 10 years time.

A future expectation shared by all was to complete their school education and attend a technikon or university to further their education. Their future career expectations cover a wide range of occupational choices. Most of the participants want to get married in the future. The age at which the participants wanted to get married varies between the ages of 25 and 30. Most of the participants would also like to have children but only once they have established a good career. Their main concern for the future was whether or not job opportunities would be available for them in the chosen careers. These findings are discussed in more detail below.

Kritzinger (2002) conducted a study with young adolescent girls living on South African farms and explored these girls' hopes, dreams and aspirations as well as their expectations of the future. From her study, three themes emerged, that is (1) completion of school education and future employment; (2) marriage and children; and (3) combining marriage and work. I have applied these three themes to the present study and will present the participants' views (both the views those participating in the present study and those who participated in Kritzinger's study) on each of these themes.

4.3.1 Completion of school education and future employment

All the participants in Kritzinger's (2002) study wanted to complete their school education; either at a technikon or university while others chose to enter paid employment after completing school, either in South Africa or overseas. Likewise the participants in the present study are all determined to complete their school education and attend a technikon or university to further their education:

Elizabeth: I think that nowadays without education you cannot live a better life, you know, you can't have a nice job; you can just work like a domestic worker or work in the mining, you know, underground, I don't like those jobs, I want to work in a office, you know, I hate working like a domestic worker. I want to pay for my sisters at the schools and then I want them to go to the universities. I want to pay for them so that they can also be, you know, educated and get something.

Some of the participants would like to take a year off prior to furthering their education and travel:

Lana: I want to do what my aunt did; she travelled around the world and she worked in like one place for a couple of months and then she got like enough money to go to another place. So that's how she travelled.

Sky: I'm going take a gap year and I'm going to travel.

The girls in Sharpe's (quoted in Frosh et al., 2002) research made choices within a range of about thirty occupations, and these were mainly in the realms of women's work, including working with or caring for children, caring for animals, air hostess, beautician, radiographer, and banking and insurance work, as well as psychology, design and the media.

The participants in the present study are asked what sort of jobs they expect to go into following their education in school. Their job or career expectations cover a wide range, from being actresses, to photographic models, a neurosurgeon, a humanitarian, a navigator, an artist, musician, advertiser, photographer, criminal psychologist, zoologist, architect and accountant. A significant number of the participants choose to pursue jobs and careers from a set of 'new' occupational opportunities that have arisen with the development of different, less secure patterns of work, for example, working in the media and computer technology (data capturer). There is a wide range of vocational courses offered by colleges and universities; these include courses that are related to various aspects of the media, performing arts, design, sport and leisure, computer and information technology. The participants also express interest in the fields of theatre, art or music, even though they realise that success could be elusive.

4.3.2 Marriage and children

Similarly, Frosh et al. (2002) and his colleagues also explored the different and contrasting attitudes of boys and girls to marriage, family and relationships. Women's and girl's attitudes have in fact changed towards commitment and marriage. Few of the girls wished to have their children before they were 21, and most saw 26 – 30 years as the best age group to have children.

Most of the participants, in the present study, want to get married in the future. The age at which the participants want to get married varies between 25 and 30 years:

Jewls: I want to be married like later, like say like 30 ok; children at maybe like 32.

Sky: I want to get married at 25 and I want to have my children at like 25, 26.

Tori: I don't want to get married like anytime soon and I definitely don't want children anytime soon.

Belle: If I had to, I wouldn't really want to have my own children. I just don't think I'm the right type of person to be a mother. As for marriage what puts me off is all this divorce; divorce is just so in fashion you know - marry him, divorce him the next day, find another one, divorce him you know.

Lana: I think sometimes people rush into marriage too quickly. That's why it ends up in divorce. I mean you get people who know each other for eight months and then they want to get married. You've got to know a person for like four years, for me, to be able to get married you know; it's like you know the person for like two years, get engaged for another two years and see how things work out and then maybe afterwards you can get married.

Dawn: My mom and my gran have influenced me that I don't really want to get married. I want to but I don't want to it's like I don't know, I don't know, I've got a big family and lots of my aunts and stuff they, I don't know, they feel intimidated almost by their husbands because they have to ask them for things and I don't want to have to do that. I don't want to have to feel scared to ask and, you know, if I want something I just want to be able to go and get it with my money and he doesn't have to say anything because it was my money. So I think that they have influenced me in that way.

Elizabeth: I will be interested to help my boyfriend but I want him to be at least educated. I want him to go back to school and I don't want him to depend on me as such. I want him to learn and have something of his own and then for my family I want to do anything I can for them because I just don't like the way we are living now because the way we are living we don't have enough money to live on so I want us to live a better life.

The girls participating in the present study also appear to reflect similar attitudes to the girls who participated in Schmidt et al's (1994) second study. The girls in the present study also demand independence and the right to have a profession of their own. They also want to share the household chores equally with their partners.

4.3.3 Combining marriage and work

In Gilligan et al's (1990) study the girls' future expectations involve that they will work after college and that work will be important to them. They all want to have relationships with men, and most want to marry and have children. Half of the girls think that they will probably interrupt their careers in order to devote themselves to raising children. Most see this as being temporary, and many want to remain self-supportive throughout marriage. A popular strategy for managing career and family is to establish a career before starting a family and then leave work for some time. Most don't want to marry right away, preferring to wait until they are over twenty-five to marry and have children. Largely unaddressed are the problems likely to be associated either with giving up hard-won meaningful careers for family life, or with obstacles to being able to come and go from work commitments at will in order to raise their own children. Without exception, the girls interviewed expressed interest in having successful careers; this was important for their future image.

While most of these girls are vague about the particular careers, relationships, and lifestyles they envision, there tends to be greater clarity with regard to their future work than with regard to their future marriages and families. For most of the girls it is easier to imagine living as an adult with a job than it is to imagine living a married life. In fact, of all the aspects of the future that is considered, marriage itself tends to be the activity that

is most vaguely or ambivalently treated. Work and children appear to be more substantial and perhaps more reliable components of adult life than marriage.

In Johnson et al's (1999) study the adolescent girls who want to work are found to have little interest in traditional family roles and expect to delay marriages and prefer to follow their chosen professions with fewer interruptions, such as pregnancies. Most of the girls participating in Kritzinger's (2002) study wanted to get married and stay at home and look after their children if they can financially afford it. A few considered the possibility of running a business from home in order to accommodate their children's needs. Others felt that if one has invested in education, one should work on a full-time basis.

The participants in the present study are similar to the girls in Kritzinger's study in that they also have different views on combining marriage and work. Most of the participants want to be career women as well as mothers. Some of the participants feel that they can be both home executives and career women by having their business at home as advanced technology has made this possible. Others prefer to separate work from home:

Lana: At home I would have to like maybe take care of my kids. I won't have time for my work or vice versa you see. So I would rather work from the office than at home. Ja, I don't know. I just think that if you work from home you have your work constantly with you kind of thing. At least at your office you know that's your workplace and at home you know this is your home type of thing.

A few of the participants mention that if they have a family that they will prefer to have part-time work so as to accommodate their children's needs. Otherwise if they are fortunate enough not to have to work at all they will rely on their husbands to support them and their families:

Dawn: I would probably have a morning job or a job that doesn't, you know, require a lot of time. So if I had kids I could spend time with them. If I didn't work I'd know I would have a degree behind me so if I'd have to work, you know, then I could.

Moreover, according to Meares (1974:22):

A woman's move away from the home can be seen not so much as contrary to biological principles i.e. by process of evolution we have come to feel pleasure or satisfaction in doing things which are of biological importance to us, but rather as an adjustment to changing conditions of society.

He predicted that the New Woman's:

desire for a career may rob [her] of domestic satisfactions. For many women it meant facing two alternatives, both of which are generally attractive, home-life or career. But the New Woman chose to see it not as a choice of one or the other, but rather as a matter of ordering her life in such a way as to have the major satisfactions of both career and family life (1974:197).

Research by sociologist Kathleen Gerson (quoted in Kimmel, 2000) argues that gender socialization is not very helpful in predicting women's family experiences. Only slightly more than half the women who are primarily interested in full-time motherhood are, in fact, full-time mothers; and only slightly more than half the women who are primarily interested in full-time careers have them. It turns out that marital stability, husband's income, women's workplace experiences, and support networks are far more important than gender socialization in determining which women end up full-time mothers and which do not. It would appear from this that a woman is always prepared to sacrifice her needs and desires for her family, for example if it was her former desire to stay at home with her children but economically it isn't viable then she will go out to work to help provide for her family's financial needs. On the other hand women that want to follow a career have given their careers up to stay home and look after their families if they are economically sound.

4.3.4 Girls' concerns about the future

The concerns expressed by the young people participating in Frosh et al's (2002) study are that the girls worry more about future relationships, families and other personal issues whereas the boys are more concerned with jobs and money.

When the participants in the present study are asked if they have any worries about the future they respond as follows:

Britney: At this age it's the most stressful, worrying about getting good enough marks to get into university and starting to think what you going to do after school and making up your mind on what to do cause there are so many options.

Belle: The main thing is like risk, if you risk this career what if you don't succeed at it then what are you going to do cause then you, by that time you might be too old to start afresh and you might not have done those subjects in matric so.

Britney: Also like, one of the main things is finance. I can't afford to go to a university.

Lana: Ja, universities are expensive.

Tori: Yes, I'm worried what I'm going to be able to do with my life in terms of jobs.

Chloe: And if you going to be able to do what you want to do and if you going to have to be forced to take a different road because you not able to get what you want.

Tori: Ja, and then you end up doing something that you hate and I'm worried about the subjects that I'm choosing.

Britney: And then like you also scared of the unpredictable.

Lana: The future, you don't know where life is going to take you. If you ever going to be successful in what you do.

Belle: Also like when you in college, teachers are not going to push you, you have to push yourself to achieve. You know the lecturers don't care if you listen or not. They're not going to care they're just going to give the lecture.

Lana: Ja, they not going to run after you.

Britney: They don't spoon-feed-you.

Belle: Ja, they just give the lecture; if you do your work or not they don't care.

Britney: People always say like in ten years time there will be no jobs cause we've got computers.

Belle: Ja that worries me.

Lana: And then like some, most of the matrix won't find jobs and you get so stressed out and worried.

Belle: Yes, you get so scared.

The participants are worried about their marks to give them university entrance, whether they will be successful at university and able to have a successful career. These participants are concerned about job opportunities unlike the girls in Frosh et al's study.

4.3.5 The new woman

Meares (1974) predicted how the process of social evolution would change the character of women; I explore these character changes in the present study.

The participants reflect some of these character changes, that is, they seek happiness, success, independence and autonomy. They strive to further their education either at a technikon or a university and thus want to be career women. They also want to be wives and mothers, but this seems to be put on hold in order to have sufficient time to study and establish their careers.

The participants are strong willed, determined and confident that they will further their studies and be successful career women with their own houses, cars and money. They want to be independent and self-supportive so that they do not have to worry about being dependent on anyone else. They want to enter jobs that were previously exclusively male dominated. They hope that they will be hired on the basis of their qualifications and not turned down because they are women. They also hope that they will not be sexually harassed or treated differently and also demand that domestic tasks and chores be shared equally between men and women.

4.3.6 What the girls are looking most forward to and least forward to in the future

When asked what they are most looking forward to when they get older the participants reply:

Sky: I can't wait to start driving.

Jewls: We're looking forward to college.

Chloe: Starting your own life.

Belle: You can do your own thing; no one's telling you ok you can't do that.

Britney: Earning your own salary and going to fend for yourself.

Belle: If you want an expensive thing you just have to save a little bit and then you can buy it.

Tori: Being independent.

Lana: Getting married I suppose and having kids; starting a family.

Britney: Ja, you are also looking forward to the things that you don't know, for example, what's going to happen? Who are you going to meet? Who are you going to get married to, and surprises. Serendipity means like fortunate accident, so you can also look forward to serendipity in life.

The participants are most looking forward to getting their driver's licenses, furthering their education, establishing their own careers and being independent. Thereafter they all want to settle down, get married and start a family.

When asked what they are least looking forward to when they get older the participant's replies are as follows:

Britney: What we least looking forward to is how South Africa is going to turn out, it's just getting worse and worse, the crime and the currency.

Belle: The rapes and murders, it's brutal and violent.

Chloe: Being alone maybe.

Sky: Having to earn your own money.

Jewls: Paying bills.

Tori: I'm scared of having sex; it's not the right time.

Chloe: Or what happens, the consequences of your actions.

Sky: Also old age.

Tori: Getting too old.

Even though the participants are looking forward to the future they appear to be apprehensive. The country itself makes them nervous, due to the high crime rates and violence. Getting older, being independent and starting a family also requires that they be more responsible and accountable.

The following are some of the responses when the participants are asked what they want to accomplish in their lives:

Tori: World famous rock star that everyone knows and adores.

Jewls: I really want my art degree.

Sky: I want to make sure that by the time I have children that there are still wild animals on this earth.

Tori: I want to be renound for my music and I want it to have an affect on people and I would really like it to be, go international but I don't know how possible that is and not just music, art as well.

Sky: Ja, I want to have an influence on people in a good way; somehow make a good influence on people.

Jewls: I know it sounds stupid but I would love to win the Nobel peace prize, maybe my drama will do something.

Chloe: I hope that I accomplish what I set out to do even though I don't really know what it is right now.

Halle: My navigation course firstly.

Lana: I hope I have a good job to support myself.

Britney: I just, I really want to be an actress. I don't want to settle for second best; I definitely want to be an actress and I want to succeed and accomplish that. I don't want to have to say 'no it didn't work out I stopped trying' I want to do it until I get it no matter what.

In response to the question as to what their aspirations and dreams include, participants comment as follows:

Jewls: To become famous for my work (advertising).

Sky: I would love to go to the moon; I want to do something way out of anybody's league, you know something that no one would ever have thought that I would do or reach. I feel very strongly to do something that not every person in the world does.

Chloe: I want to be looked up to in my old age and I want to be a good person and have no, no regrets when I die. Everything that I wanted to do I want to have accomplished.

Jewls: I would like to invent something that people look back in history books and they know that I invented it.

Halle: I've never been overseas so travelling is my dream; going overseas, seeing different places and exploring countries.

Belle: What I would like to do is take like a whole year off, maybe even two. If I had enough money I would just travel and see everything, experience everything. I want to find like stability in my life you know even if it's study for a little then get a job.

Britney: I want to go overseas to study; it's like a specific university called Ithaca in New York.

4.3.7 Where the girls see themselves in 10 years time

The following are some of the responses when the participants are asked where they see themselves in ten years time, as a woman:

Dawn: I expect to have a degree and I would like to think that I will be happily married, I don't know, and have a family and a job but I don't know about that and I would like to think that I will be in a job that I'm happy with, you know and that I enjoy doing and ja that's basically it, I think. I would like to study in Cape Town. I just feel Cape Town is more laid back and casual; Johannesburg is just too busy.

Elizabeth: My future plan is to live here in Rustenburg and settle somewhere near town and work as a data capturer anywhere in town where there is a job opportunity. My expectation is to earn a salary of at least R8000, 00 a month and see my family living a happy life forever.

Sky: I see myself married with a family.

Jewls: I see myself married but not with a family, or engaged.

Lana: Probably working somewhere overseas. Definitely not married, no ways not at twenty-six!

Britney: I see myself as being rich because I mean when you're an actress and you make one big movie you get paid a lot I also see myself as being famous and in a committed relationship.

The girls participating in Kritzinger's (2002:561) study "wish to settle down with a successful husband, be financially well off, have a small family of their own and a successful career, own a big house and a car, travel, and very importantly, to live in a large town or city". In the present study most of the participants think that they will have completed a university, technikon or college degree and that they will be happy and successful in their jobs. They also see themselves being either in a committed relationship, engaged or married.

In the concluding chapter next section I present a brief overview of the findings of this study. I offer recommendations for future research and present a critical review of the study.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this section the main findings will be summarised, and recommendations for future research as well as a critical review of the research study will be presented.

The aim of the present study was to explore and describe, from the perspective of a multi-racial group of female adolescents, the following: (a) how young adolescent girls living in Rustenburg perceive gender roles in general and how they perceive their own roles; (b) their gender relations with other adolescents; and (c) their views on and expectations of the future as women.

5.1 FINDINGS

This study aimed to explore and describe, from the perspective of a group of female adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18 years living in Rustenburg the following, three dimensions of gender: (a) gender roles (b) gender relations and (c) future expectations as women. I suggested that the participants are living in a time that is remarkably different from the past. The Rustenburg community has been a farming community where the men farmed and supplied for their families while the women took care of the domestic chores of cooking, cleaning, washing, and childbearing, sewing and generally caring for their families. Presently the Rustenburg community is a combination of farming and mining. More and more people are moving into Rustenburg because of the work opportunities available on the platinum mines. Due to this influx of people and the expansion of the mining industry, Rustenburg is growing tremendously. The Waterfall Mall is an example of this, as it has been built and its expansion continues. There is also an expansion in housing developments, new residential areas, new schools, libraries, colleges and the decentralisation of small business on the outskirts of the C.B.D. The Waterfall Mall offers entertainment to the majority of young people through the games centre, an internet café, cinemas, restaurants and a variety of shops.

The advancement in technology, for example playing computer games, is having a significant influence on the lifestyle of adolescent girls and activities in which they participate. I showed that most of the participants' social activities comprise of indoor activities such as going to the mall, going to each others homes, and the local gym. Their

outdoor activities, offered mainly by their schools, include sport such as hockey, tennis and athletics.

The passage of time, technical advancement, the development of wider social influences and cultural maturation as a result of the “shrinking” world is making gender more fluid than it has previously been. The advancement in technology is making the world a smaller place in which cultures can influence one another. Culture is continuously changing and transforming; fashion, the music industry, and the media are all constantly changing. Even though Rustenburg is a fairly remote area, it is evident that the participants have been and continuously are being influenced by the media and other cultures. The participants’ views on gender reflect a shift from conservative perceptions to more liberal and modern perceptions and manifest in the ways they act, dress, and talk. They are influenced by the magazines they read, the music they listen to, and by the television programmes and movies they watch.

There are a wider variety of career options available to young people today thus expanding their interests and their expectations for the future. Women now pursue careers that were previously not permitted or were only occupied by men. The participants have so many more opportunities available to them compared to what was available in the past. This is evident in the career choices that the participants hope to pursue in future. I showed that the participants would like to pursue careers in acting, photography, advertising, navigation, accounting, architecture, psychology, zoology and medicine. Their choices are endless in comparison to the minimal choices that young women had available to them in the past such as nursing, teaching and secretarial work.

I also argue that all of the participants are socialized by the media, their families, their schools as well as their friends.

Nuclear families are the most important contexts for young people’s development. It is at the level of the family that children learn their gender roles. Children learn and develop gender role attitudes, for example, who and what women are and their expected roles. I demonstrated that all of the participants are performing traditional roles of cooking and cleaning, making their own beds and cleaning their own rooms etc. Yet they all aspire to be career women in the future as opposed to home executives. The nature of young people’s family experience varies enormously; most of the participants are growing up in close-knit families but some are growing up in single-parent families. Schools are important contexts of many young people’s lives as they give young people the resources

to prepare them for adulthood. Peers offer young people valuable resources such as companionship, emotional support, and an arena in which to try out and learn important social skills.

I also showed how participants interact with their peers – girls as well as boys. The participants were shown to get along with both younger and older girls. The older girls, according to the participants, make them feel more mature and older. The younger girls look up to them and admire them which makes them feel proud. The participants' friendship with boys allows each of them respectively the opportunity to access each other's different worlds and gives them insight into what it is like to be the opposite sex.

The common future expectations raised by the participants are that they would all like to complete their school education and attend a technikon or university to further their education and thus become career women. Their future career expectations cover a wide range of occupational choices. Most of the participants want to get married in the future and the age at which the participants want to get married varies between the ages of 25 and 30 years. Most of the participants would also like to have children but only once they have established a good career. The participants also demand that domestic tasks and chores be shared equally. Their main concerns for the future are whether or not there will be job opportunities for them in the careers that they wish to pursue.

Finally, I also demonstrated that the participants seek happiness, success, independence and autonomy. The participants are strong willed, determined and confident that they will further their studies and be successful career women with their own houses, cars and money. They want to be independent and self-supportive so that they do not have to worry about being dependent on anyone else.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CRITICAL REFLECTION

5.2.1. Although the conclusions of this study show many similarities with studies done with adolescents around the world, it does not mean that gender roles, actual gender relations and future expectations as women are understood and explained in the same way across various social contexts. The fact that the participants were predominantly middle-class and attending English schools in Rustenburg may have limited the variation of results found. It is therefore recommended that more

studies of this nature be conducted in South Africa amongst adolescents who differ in terms of race, class, culture and geographical location.

- 5.2.2 The method that provided adequate structured guidelines to manage and analyse the qualitative data, was thematic analysis. I have already explained that thematic analysis focuses on identifiable themes and patterns of living and/or behaviour. It is driven by theory (deductive) or by data (inductive). In the present study thematic analysis was driven by data i.e. the individual assignments and the transcripts from the individual interviews and focus group discussions. It would be interesting to use more interpretive analytical methods such as narrative analysis or discourse analysis.
- 5.2.3. Silverman (1997:105) argues that researchers should be members of the groups they study in order to have the subjective knowledge necessary to truly understand their life experiences. The meaning systems of adolescents are different from those of adults, and adult researchers must exercise caution in assuming they have an understanding of adolescent cultures because they've been there. Compared to the participants, the researcher is older, of the same gender, but in some instances of a different race and class background. Thus the findings and conclusions of this study have been co-constructed by the researcher. In part, therefore, this research is the construction of a white, 23 year old female, middle-class researcher who was for all purposes an outsider looking in. One will never know if and/or how the findings and conclusions of an insider researcher would have been different.
- 5.2.4 The recommended size of a focus group is between 8 and 12 members. If I had brought together all the present research participants into one focus group I may have yielded richer data.
- 5.2.5 I utilized three methods of gathering data: individual assignments, individual interviews and focus group discussions. If I had solely made use of focus group discussions it probably would have been sufficient but the three phase process enabled me as the researcher to establish rapport and trust with the participants.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

I, Rae-Julie Paxton, am a student at the University of Stellenbosch. I am currently doing my masters degree in Youth Development and Policy at the Department of Sociology. The title of my thesis is "What does it mean to be a girl in Rustenburg?" My supervisors are Professor A. Kritzinger and Mr. F. van Aswegen. If any of you would like to contact them with regards to my thesis they can be reached on 021-808 2097/8 or alternatively on ask@sun.ac.za or fwva@sun.ac.za.

Due to women's roles changing over the last 10-20 years and the fact that most women no longer view themselves as mothers and housewives only, I am interested in exploring how young adolescent girls in Rustenburg view women's roles in general as well as what they think and feel about themselves and how they define their own roles at this present time in their lives.

I would like to explore young adolescent girls' leisure patterns; their interests and hobbies; the ways in which they view themselves in relation to their homes and schools; how they engage with their parents, teachers and friends (both boys and girls); and what their views are regarding their future, i.e. their future plans and expectations.

Therefore, I would like to invite you to participate in this research wherein I am going to attempt to understand what it is like to be a girl in Rustenburg. If you are willing to participate in this study I would like you to write an essay on what it means for you to be a girl in Rustenburg. Thereafter I would like for you to attend an individual interview in which we will discuss any issues that arose in your essay. Then at a later stage I would like for you to attend two focus group discussions in which we will discuss, more in-depth, the issues that you and other girls may have mentioned in your essays as well as your individual interviews.

In the individual interview you will be able to choose a pseudonym, which will be used as your name in the present study. I would like to assure you that I will respect your privacy and that all information divulged to me will be anonymous and confidential.

The individual interviews will be approximately one hour each. The focus group discussions will be approximately two to three hours each. I am going to record the individual interviews as well as the focus group discussions, as I will not be able to remember or write down everything that you tell me.

If the individual interviews or group discussions lead to further questions or if you don't understand something you are more than welcome to contact me on my cell phone.

If you have read and understood all of the above and agree to undergo an individual interview as well as the focus group discussions I would appreciate it if you could please sign this consent form.

I, _____ the pupil to be interviewed hereby give my consent to the interviews and the group discussions and understand my rights during these discussions as described above.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

I/We, _____ the Parent/Legal Guardians of _____
Hereby consent to the above stated individual interview and group discussions and agree to its entirety.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

The individual interviews as well as the group discussions will commence on days and at times which are most convenient for the participants, as I do not want to interfere with any of your school work and extramural activities.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

THEME ONE: GENDER ROLES

- What is a girl?
- Poem 'Fifteen'
- What do you like about being a girl?
- What do you dislike about being a girl?
- What do girls get anxious about?
- How important is physical appearance?
- What does society value in women?
- Describe what you see as the 'perfect girl/ideal woman'?
- Describe what you see as the 'perfect boy/ideal man'?
- How important is physical appearance? (E.g. looks, clothing, make-up etc.)
- How do you think that women's roles have changed over the last 10 to 20 years?
- What are women's roles today?
- What are the demands on women today?
- What do you think about women who stay at home and don't work?
- What do you think about career women?
- What type of woman do you want to be?
- Do you want to get married?
- Do you want children?
- Photo exercise; (a) two photographs that portray someone who is most like them, (b) two photographs that portray someone who is least like them, and (c) two photographs that portray someone they would most like to be like and the reasons for their choices.
- Why do you value independence? What purpose does it serve? What motivates its pursuit?
- What do you think of feminists?

THEME TWO: GENDER RELATIONS

- How do you get on with older and younger girls in your school?
- Are some girls popular at school? What makes them popular?
- Are some girls unpopular at school? What makes them unpopular?
- What are the differences and similarities between girls and boys?
- Is it similar of different being with boys than it is with girls?
- Do you mix more or less with boys than you did in primary school?
- What is it like having boys as friends?
- Do you tend to spend most of your time with boys or girls?
- Do you do the same things with girls as with boys who are friends?
- What do you and your friends like doing together?

THEME THREE: FUTURE EXPECTATIONS AS WOMEN

- What do you want to have accomplished / succeeded?
- Do you have any concerns or worries about the future?
- What are you looking most forward to in the future?
- What are you looking least forward to in the future?
- What are your aspirations?
- What are your dreams?
- Where do you see yourself in 10 years time, AS A WOMAN?